

# Mr. Rogers - American Terminator

An Comedy About Theatre In The Digital Age

By William Missouri Downs

Agent: Patricia McLaughlin  
Beacon Artists Agency  
beaconagency@hotmail.com  
212 736 6630  
57 West 57th Street - 4th floor  
New York, New York 10019

CAST OF CHARACTERS

**JOJO PORCHNIK** (20ish, Female, Any Race)

A musical theatre major

**MARTHA DRAKE** (Ageless, Probably Female, Any Race)

A hyper-connected, multitasking, high-functioning alcoholic

**GEORGE DRAKE** (Ageless, Probably Male, Any Race)

A hyper-connected, multitasking, high-functioning alcoholic

**BROOKLYN GRAY** (30ish, Male, Any Race)

A vehement writer who still uses a typewriter

**PERSON FROM AUDIENCE** (Ageless, Any Gender, Any Race)

A member of the audience who controls a massive corporation

**MR. ROGERS** (Ageless, Any Gender, Any Race)

The charming, mild-mannered children's host

**SETTING:** The stage is fractured, incomplete. The playing area becomes various suggested locations. There's a bed, a sofa, and doors, but none of it adds up to a unified whole, just like modern life. The theatrical lights above and the braces that hold the fractured partial walls together are exposed. It's as if the crew lost focus and left to get drunk before the set was finished.

**TIME & PLACE:** Right here and now.

**Please Note**

**As the audience enters the theatre they pass through metal detectors. The ushers (or actors) act like TSA agents.**

*(The lights power up on the sofa as GEORGE and MARTHA invade the room. They're modern-high-energy multitasking, workaholic/alcoholics permanently attached to their I-phones. They hold programs for the play Brain Freeze.)*

GEORGE

*(Pissed, power drunk)*

That! Is an hour and a half I'll never get back!

MARTHA

*(On her cell, power drunk, lying)*

Yes, we had a marvelous time!

GEORGE

What the hell was that about?

MARTHA

*(Waving him off, on phone)*

Arlene, can we talk later? ...No, we haven't been drinking. Thanks for the tickles, I mean pickles. What am I saying// Tickets!

*(She hangs up. He makes drinks. During the scene they power down cocktails.)*

GEORGE

*(Intense)*

So we live in a world filled with misery and suffering and viruses and it's going to end badly - Who doesn't know this?

MARTHA

And all that dialogue!

GEORGE

I thought the stupid actors would never shut their stupid mouths.

MARTHA

And what the hell was all that talk about "Dead Zones"?

GEORGE

And what was the smoking luggage supposed to represent?

MARTHA

I'd better text Kathy and Karen in sales and warn'em. I they're going tomorrow night.

*(She thumb-types her I-phone.)*

*(A I-phone bings.)*

MARTHA

Is'at you or me?

GEORGE

*(Off his phone)*

Me. It's my mother. *(Squinting to read his phone)* "Dear George, just want to let you know, your Uncle Bob dropped dead twenty minutes ago."

MARTHA

*(On her phone, not listening)*

Say hello for me.

GEORGE

Wow, he must've been, like, ninety. I should send flowers.

MARTHA

*(Not looking up)*

What's this now?

GEORGE

Uncle Bob, dead.

MARTHA

*(Still thumb typing)*

Wow, he must've been, like, ninety. You should send flowers.

GEORGE

*(To his I-phone)*

Siri, what type of flowers are appropriate for a funeral?

SIRI FROM PHONE

"Okay, here's what I found for what type of flooring is appropriate for Ferrets."

GEORGE

*(Talking to his I-phone)*

No. What type of *flowers* are appropriate for a *funeral*?

SIRI FROM PHONE

"Okay, here's what I found for what are the hours for the baccalaureate tribunal."

*(I-phone bings.)*

MARTHA

Is'at?

GEORGE

Me. *(Off his I-phone, matter of factly)* Terrorist attack in Kazakhstan, thirty-two dead. *(Without a beat)* Don't tell me we're out of gin.

*(I-phone bings.)*

MARTHA

*(Off her phone)*

Stop! It's a text from our boss. *(Reading)* "Enjoyed the play tonight, thanks for taking me." Holy crap.

GEORGE

What's wrong?

MARTHA

*(Deeply troubled)*

He didn't use any exclamation points!

GEORGE

You're kidding.

MARTHA

*(Regretting)*

What were we thinking taking him to a play? We blew it.

GEORGE

*(Amazed, off her phone)*

Not one exclamation point?

MARTHA

Do you realize what this means? We're not going to get a holiday bonus this year.

GEORGE

Maybe he, like, like, forgot.

MARTHA

No, he always uses at least three exclamation points if he likes something or at the very least a smiley face. *(Bitter, paranoid)* Now it all makes sense, Arlene set us up. I was in the break room and she said, "take the boss to a play, that'll impress him. I can get you tickles." She knew what she was doing.

*(His I-phone bings.)*

GEORGE

*(Off his phone)*

Found it. *(Reading his phone)* "Classic deep red roses evoke love and grief. The rarer dark pink are used to express thankfulness to the dead." Bingo.

*(He pushes buttons on his phone.)*

MARTHA

I'm going to get that little witch. I'm goin' to take her and her comp tickles and I'm goin' to... *(Into her I-phone)* Siri, how do you get someone fired?

SIRI FROM PHONE

Okay, here's what I found for, how to get a blowgun wired.

*(I-phone bings.)*

GEORGE

What should the e-card say? We get three choices: *(Squinting to read)* "Our thoughts are with you." "Deepest sympathy." Or a third that sounds like the first two.

MARTHA

Just pick one.

*(He closes his eyes and picks one.)*

GEORGE

Emojification?

MARTHA

Sad face with tear.

GEORGE

*(Scrolling the emojis)*

Sad face with tear. Sad face with tear.

MARTHA

Now that I think about it, this is all that damn theatre's fault. Are you listening?

GEORGE

*(Focusing on his phone)*

Scrolling, scrolling.

MARTHA

The program clearly stated that the play was seventy-five minutes without intermission. In fact it was eighty-one! I hate theatre people, they can't tell time.

*(I-phone bings.)*

MARTHA

Is'at?

GEORGE

You.

MARTHA

*(Off her phone)*

It's Kathy and Karen. *(Reading)* "Thanks. Will avoid." And three exclamation points. See, that's how it's done.

GEORGE

Sad face with tear - Found it. And send.

MARTHA

*(Calculating)*

Wait. Idea. Why tell just Kathy and Karen? We need to tell the world this play sucks.

GEORGE

We could facebook it.

MARTHA

But then only my three-thousand close personal friends'll see it. And only two will like it.

GEORGE

Twitter?

MARTHA

So yesterday.

GEORGE

Post a hate-filled review on YouTube?

MARTHA

You are a genius!

*(I-phone bings.)*

GEORGE

Is'at?

MARTHA

Me. *(Squinting, off her phone)* It's my gynecologist, pap smear's normal.

GEORGE

Let's do it in front of the books, it'll make us look smarter-er.

*(They stumble over to their tiny collection of books, like seven.)*

MARTHA

Listen to me, this is important. Are you listening?

GEORGE  
*(Not listening)*

To every word!

MARTHA  
*(Drunkly stumbling on her words)*

We must make this totally magnanimous.

GEORGE

What?

MARTHA

You know what I mean... magnanimous.

GEORGE

Are you trying to say anonymous?

MARTHA

That's what I'm saying.

GEORGE

Agreed.

*(He's ready for a selfie-video.)*

MARTHA

Wait. Put it up higher, it'll make us look younger.

GEORGE

Ready?

MARTHA

And tilt your head, it'll highlight your cheekbones.

GEORGE

Ready?

MARTHA

Wait. Get closer. I want everyone to think we have a fantastic sex life.

*(They go into their perfect pose which they do for all selfies.)*

GEORGE

And we're recording!

MARTHA  
(*To the I-phone*)

Hello world!

GEORGE'  
(*To the I-phone*)

George and Martha Drake here.

MARTHA  
This was supposed to be magnanimous.

GEORGE  
Well, it's too late now. Go!

MARTHA  
We just got back from the play 'Brain Freeze' at the Dirty Fish Theatre Company and it...

GEORGE  
(*Doing a close up on his face*)  
Suuuuuuuuucked!

MARTHA  
All the actors did was talk.

GEORGE  
And to make things worse there were scenes that lasted like *ten minutes*.

MARTHA  
He's not making this crap up, folks, I was there, I can verify!

GEORGE  
I mean, two people doing *nothing* but talking for a whole ten whole minutes!

MARTHA  
Who does that anymore?

GEORGE  
And there was this monologue.

MARTHA  
O.M.G. The monologue, at the end.

GEORGE

It lasted for like, like, like... What?

MARTHA

Three minutes!

GEORGE

Three continual minutes of someone just talking at you! Can you believe it!

MARTHA

You can't make this crap up, people!

GEORGE

And it took place at a dinner party.

MARTHA

Like, what the hell?

GEORGE

Who does dinner parties any more?

MARTHA

And what was that reference to Mr. Rogers about?

GEORGE

I don't know. It made no sense!

MARTHA

I hereby swear we'll never go to the theatre again!

GEORGE

Pinky swear!

MARTHA

Pinky swear!

*(They have trouble finding each other's pinkies.)*

MARTHA

\cept musicals.

GEORGE

That's right, \cept musicals.

MARTHA

People who write musicals are different, they care!

GEORGE

Give me a musical by, by, by Jerome... ah...

MARTHA

Hammer-sing-ie.

GEORGE

Or, or Stephen Sond-hammer.

MARTHA

No. Not him. He sucks.

GEORGE

You're right. *(Shouting at the phone)* You suck Stephen Sond-hammer!

MARTHA

I can verify that!

GEORGE

But, but, but Andrew Lloyd... whatever.

MARTHA

Yes! Him! He cares.

GEORGE

That's because musical theatre people care in general! Unlike... What was this playwright's name?

*(She picks up the program.)*

MARTHA

Ah... Brooklyn Gray.

GEORGE

*(To the I-phone)*

Screw you Brooklyn Gray!

MARTHA

*(To the I-phone)*

That's right, screw you and your stupid dialogue!

GEORGE  
*(Barking)*

You Suck-ity-Suck-Suck!

MARTHA

Ten minute scenes!

GEORGE

Three minute monologues!

MARTHA

Someone needs to off this S.O.B. before he can write another play!

GEORGE

It's official! As of tonight! Because of you Brooklyn Gray - Theatre! Dead!

*(MARTHA gives the finger to the I-phone.)*

MARTHA

Right there Brooklyn Gray! You suck!

*(He does a close up of his crotch.)*

GEORGE

Suck this!

*(She gets down and points at his crotch.)*

MARTHA

That's right! Suck that!

GEORGE

You Suck Brooklyn Gray!

GEORGE AND MARTHA  
*(Chanting)*

You Suck Brooklyn Gray! You Suck Brooklyn Gray!

*(She slips and falls. He tries to help her but ends up falling too.)*

*(From the floor they scream with laughter. He stops recording.)*

GEORGE

Shall I post?

MARTHA

Post!

GEORGE

But everyone'll see it. Even our boss.

MARTHA

Do it! Post it!

GEORGE

But//.

MARTHA

*(Chanting)*

Do It! Do It! Do It!

*(He stupidly hits a few buttons.)*

GEORGE

I did it! I posted it!

*(Guffawing.)*

GEORGE

I need to throw up!

*(I-phone bings.)*

GEORGE

Is'at?

MARTHA

*(Off her I-phone)*

Me. O.M.G.! It's a text from our boss. "P.S." *(Beat)* Ha!  
Three exclamation points!

GEORGE

What?!

MARTHA

He texted three exclamation points!!! Crisis averted!

*(They laugh with joy.)*

GEORGE

But you know he's lying.

MARTHA

We do?

GEORGE

Cause that play suckity-sucked!

*(He slaps the floor and laughs.)*

MARTHA

*(drunkenly thumb typing)*

"So glad you liked it." Exclamation point, exclamation point, exclamation point. Shall I go for gold?

GEORGE

Do it!

MARTHA

*(Thumb typing)*

Smiley Face!

GEORGE

Now, I really do gotta throw up!

MARTHA

And I'll throw up after you. *(Thumb typing)* Dear Arlene, thanks for the pickles. Exclamation point. Exclamation point. Exclamation point. Winking face with stuck out tongue.

*(I-phone bings.)*

GEORGE

Is'at?

MARTHA

You.

GEORGE

*(Off his phone)*

Flower order confirmed. Farewell Uncle Bob!

MARTHA

*(Off her phone)*

Sweetheart, guess what?

GEORGE

What?

MARTHA

We've already got one view.

GEORGE

You Suck Brooklyn Gray!

GEORGE AND MARTHA

*(Chanting)*

You Suck Brooklyn Gray! You Suck Brooklyn Gray! You Suck  
Brooklyn Gray!

*(Drunk and giggling, they crawl off  
still chanting.)*

*(The tone of the play completely  
changes as the Candy-land lights  
cover the stage. A piano warmly  
tinkles.)*

*(Enter MR. ROGERS, the iconic  
children's show host. As he sings,  
he takes off his coat, puts on a  
red cardigan and changes into  
comfortable sneakers.)*

MR. ROGERS

(SINGING)

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD  
A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR A NEIGHBOR  
WOULD YOU BE MINE?  
COULD YOU BE MINE?  
IT'S SURE GETTING HOT IN THE USA  
WE SHOULDN'T HAVE CANCELLED THE EPA  
THINGS WILL BE FINE  
IF YOU AVOID THE HEADLINES

TOGETHER WE'LL WATCH THE WORLD BECOME  
 TOTALLY UNGLUE-D  
 IF THINGS GET MUCH WORSE WE'LL CALL THE  
 A.C.L.U.  
 THERE'S NO NEED TO HAVE A PANIC ATTACK  
 JUST SIT BACK AND ENJOY ANOTHER PROZAC  
 WOULD YOU SHARE MINE  
 COULD YOU SHARE MINE?  
 LET'S ALL SHARE OUR PROZAC

MR. ROGERS

*(Kindly, to the audience)*

Hello boys and girls. Before we continue the play, the management would like to apologize for using metal detectors as you entered. Metal detectors can be scary. But it's okay to feel. You just need to understand that we have to make sure none of you are a threat to national security. Can you say that? Threat to...

*(Mr. Rogers prompts the audience to answer.)*

MR. ROGERS & AUDIENCE

National security.

MR. ROGERS

Very good. You just saw a scene about George and Martha. They are high functioning alcoholics. Can you say high functioning...

*(Mr. Rogers prompts the audience to answer.)*

MR. ROGERS & AUDIENCE

Alcoholics.

*(A piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

Oh. Did you hear that? That means it's time to change scenes. We now take you to a tiny studio apartment, not much more than a bed and computer.

*(Lights up on a small bed with a computer sitting next to it.)*

MR. ROGERS

This is the apartment of Jojo Porchnik. She's a musical theatre major and she's about to have unprotected sex with a stranger she met three hours ago. Can you say venereal disease? Venereal...

*(He prompts the audience.)*

MR. ROGERS & AUDIENCE

Disease.

MR. ROGERS

Very good. The man she's about to sleep with is named Brooklyn Gray. Have we heard that name before? That's right. He's the playwright who wrote the play 'Brain Freeze' that George and Martha posted about. Whatever's about to happen, Jojo and Brooklyn's relationship has no future beyond a regrettable one night stand. Can you say, regrettable...

*(He prompts the audience.)*

MR. ROGERS & AUDIENCE

One night stand.

MR. ROGERS

If you don't know what that is, don't worry you'll know soon enough. Okay, it's later that same night. Let's see what happens shall we?

*(MR. ROGERS steps aside. The lights crash back to reality.)*

*(JOJO and BROOKLYN enter the small apartment. They too have been drinking. She's a bit grunge and a free sprit. He, like most playwrights is neurotic and uncomfortable with reality.)*

JOJO

What ya think?

BROOKLYN

Ah. Small.

JOJO

Not that small. One hundred and twenty square feet. Guess who once lived here.

BROOKLYN

Little people?

JOJO

Mel Brooks.

BROOKLYN

You're kidding. The guy who wrote 'The Producers' and 'Young 'Frankenstein.'

JOJO

He lived here when he was writing for the Emperor of Rome.

BROOKLYN

The Emperor of Rome?

JOJO

Caesar.

BROOKLYN

...You mean Sid Caesar.

JOJO

Who?

BROOKLYN

Sid Caesar, the brilliant TV comedian of the 1950's, not Julius Caesar the sociopath who lived two thousand years ago.

JOJO

Seventy years ago, two thousand years ago, what's the dif.

*(Her I-phone bings. She checks it.)*

BROOKLYN

Have to be somewhere?

JOJO

*(Off phone, matter-of-factly)*

No, my blackhead dissolving gel shipped. Wine?

BROOKLYN

Ah. Sure.

JOJO

All I got is cheap generic. Matter of fact it's so cheap it's called Cheap Generic.

*(She picks up half a bottle of "Cheap Generic.")*

BROOKLYN

Sounds horrible.

JOJO

And it's lukewarm.

BROOKLYN

You've sold me. Pour.

*(During the following she unscrews bottle and pours into paper cups.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Looking at the place)*

Mel Brooks. Wow.

JOJO

Yeah, in my ancient history class we learned about him.

BROOKLYN

You go to a university that still offers history classes - I'm impressed.

JOJO

Only online. Got an "A." But who doesn't. Wait! I think I might've binged a Mel Brooks movie once. It was about this guy who was like trying to do a musical about dancing Hitlers.

BROOKLYN

'The Producers.'

JOJO

Might've been. I don't know.

BROOKLYN

Wait. How can you be a musical theatre major and not know 'The Producers?'

JOJO

Does it have princesses in it?

BROOKLYN

No.

JOJO

I don't watch musicals that don't have princesses. So skipped through it on my I-pad.

BROOKLYN

You skipped through it. That's like seeing a replica of the Grand Canyon.

JOJO

I did in fact once see a replica of the Grand Canyon in Las Vegas.

BROOKLYN

Why didn't you drive four hours and see the real thing?

JOJO

Why should I? I saw it.

BROOKLYN

But//

JOJO

Have you ever seen the movie 'The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension'?

BROOKLYN

...No.

JOJO

I might ask you the same.

*(She offers him a half eaten bag of Cheetos.)*

Cheeto?  
 JOJO

I'm okay.  
 BROOKLYN

*(Her I-phone bings. She checks it.)*

BROOKLYN  
 Really, if you have something to do.

JOJO  
*(Off her phone, matter-of-factly)*  
 Terrorist attack in Nepal. Fifty-eight dead. *(Without a beat)*  
 You know, I only allow special people here. Only literary  
 giants.

BROOKLYN  
 What other 'giants' made the grade?

JOJO  
 You're my first. I even own a copy of your book 'Intellectual  
 Misdemeanors.'

*(She picks up a thin book.)*

JOJO  
 It's priced on Amazon at one cent but if it were autographed  
 it might be worth, like... two.

BROOKLYN  
 Sure. Give.

*(She hands him the book. He starts  
 to sign but stops.)*

BROOKLYN  
 Ah, this is embarrassing...

JOJO  
 Jojo.

BROOKLYN  
 Jojo, I knew that.

*(He didn't know that. He autographs the book and tosses it aside.)*

JOJO

Shall we continue this conversation in bed?

BROOKLYN

Sure. I'll just move your Harry Potter coloring book over here and we can get started.

JOJO

*(Referring to her computer)*

Camera on or off?

BROOKLYN

Camera?

*(She points at the computer next to the bed.)*

JOJO

I can cover the built-in my computer with a smiley face sticker if you'd like.

BROOKLYN

*(Amazed)*

You *voluntarily* live-stream your love making?

JOJO

Don't you feel like you're in danger of disappearing if you're not being observed? I post therefore I am.

BROOKLYN

...Well, if you don't mind, I'd rather have what Richard Nixon called "plausible deniability."

JOJO

Richard who?

BROOKLYN

Nixon. During the post performance talk-back I'll tell you all about him.

*(It's not that JOJO is dumb, she's just a product of the modern age.)*

JOJO  
So no internet.

BROOKLYN  
Rather not.

JOJO  
What about Facebook?

BROOKLYN  
That's part of the internet.

JOJO  
Oh, right.

*(She puts a smiley face sticker  
over the camera on her Mac.)*

JOJO  
Wait, problem, my smart-vibrator is connected to the web.

BROOKLYN  
*(Amazed)*  
You use a vibrator that's connected to the *world wide web*?

JOJO  
Why do you think it's called 'smart.'

BROOKLYN  
You do know that means that your vibrator can be hacked.

JOJO  
No, I installed a firewall. And this morning I downloaded  
version 9.3.1.

BROOKLYN  
What are a 'terms of services agreement' like on a vibrator  
firewall like?

JOJO  
Don't know, who reads.

BROOKLYN  
But if you don't read the terms of service - it could be  
'Mein Kampf' that you're agreeing to.

JOJO

Mein what?

BROOKLYN

Tell ya what, let's not use any device that has the word  
'smart' in it.

JOJO

Are you telling me that you're unconnected?

BROOKLYN

I don't have a cell-phone, I shutdown my Facebook account and  
I use a typewriter.

JOJO

Typewriter? Oh, wait, you mean like Charles Dickens.

BROOKLYN

What?

JOJO

Like in olden days.

BROOKLYN

Yes, like Charles Dickens.

JOJO

So, if I'm catching your drift, you're telling me that you  
won't be interested in posting a post-climax selfie.

BROOKLYN

Let's, ah, cross that bridge when we get there.

*(Her I-phone bings.)*

JOJO

*(Off her I-phone)*

Pandemics back, we'd better hurry. Alexa, play sex music.

*(Her Amazon Alexa lights up. Cheep,  
creepy porn music plays.)*

BROOKLYN

Ah... Ah...

JOJO  
Jojo

BROOKLYN  
Jojo, could we do without the music?

JOJO  
What for?

BROOKLYN  
It's kinda breaking my concentration.

JOJO  
Yeah but I need music to trigger my desire.

BROOKLYN  
But it kinda un-triggers me.

JOJO  
*(Disappointed)*  
Okay sure. Alexa, stop playing sex music.

*(The sex music stops.)*

BROOKLYN  
How do you know that someone at Amazon's world headquarters isn't listening in?

JOJO  
What's the dif?

BROOKLYN  
Doesn't it bother you?

JOJO  
They say they don't and I believe'em.

BROOKLYN  
But how do you know?

JOJO  
Guess I don't.

BROOKLYN  
But how can you live without knowing?

JOJO

I don't know who you are and I'm okay with that.

BROOKLYN

Well, maybe you shouldn't be okay with that.

JOJO

Okay. You're right. Alexa, who is Brooklyn Gray?

ALEXA

"Brooklyn Gray is a playwright and short story writer. His most notable work, 'Intellectual Misdemeanors' was panned by the New York Times who called it meaningless gibberish. His credit rating is--"

BROOKLYN

Siri--

JOJO

Alexa--

BROOKLYN

Alexa, shut up.

JOJO

Can I be honest? Didn't like your play tonight.

BROOKLYN

Excuse me?

JOJO

I think I might've got bored.

BROOKLYN

Because?

JOJO

It took place at a dinner party.

BROOKLYN

What's wrong with that?

JOJO

*(Eating Cheetos)*

Who goes to dinner parties anymore? And what was the smoking luggage about?

BROOKLYN

It's symbolism.

JOJO

And the actors did an awful lot of talking.

BROOKLYN

What's wrong with that?

JOJO

Talking's a time-suck.

BROOKLYN

So let's not talk. I'll just put the Cheetos over here to free up your hands.

*(He puts the Cheetos aside and kisses her neck.)*

*(Behind his back she quietly takes out her I-phone and checks it.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Kissing her neck)*

Something wrong?

JOJO

*(Distracted by her phone)*

No, why?

BROOKLYN

It seems, like you're... removed. Wait. Are you on your phone?

JOJO

*(Thumb typing)*

If you're doing less than three things at once, you're not living.

BROOKLYN

*(Shocked)*

Are you checking your e-mails?

JOJO

Updating status. *(Thumb typing emojis)* Eggplant, Jackhammer, Cherry, Explosion... Shower head.

BROOKLYN

Could you please concentrate on the task at hand.

*(He goes back to kissing her neck, after a moment she again checks her phone behind his back.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Frustrated)*

What are you doing now, playing Candy Crush?

JOJO

I can do more than one thing at a time. It's called multitasking.

BROOKLYN

But I don't want multitasking, I want mono-tasking, full frontal mono-tasking!

JOJO

Did you know that your play tonight lasted eighty-one minutes.

BROOKLYN

*(Confused by the topic change)*

What're we talking about now?

JOJO

That's like an hour and twenty-one minutes.

BROOKLYN

So? Plays used to last three, four hours and have five acts.

JOJO

Have you seen this?

*(She shows him her I-phone.)*

JOJO

It's a YouTube review about your play. And it's got like twenty thousand hits.

BROOKLYN

Let me see that.

*(They sit together and watch the video from her I-Phone.)*

GEORGE  
*(From I-phone)*

Screw you Brooklyn Gray!

MARTHA  
*(From I-phone)*

That's right, screw you and your stupid dialogue!

GEORGE  
*(From I-phone)*

You Suckity-suck-suck!

*(A cell phone rings in the audience.)*

MARTHA  
*(From I-phone)*

Ten minute scenes!

GEORGE  
*(From I-phone)*

Three minute monologues!

MARTHA  
*(From I-phone)*

Someone needs to off this S.O.B. before he can write another play!

*(More ringing from the audience.)*

GEORGE  
*(From I-phone)*

It's official! As of tonight! Because of you Brooklyn Gray - Theatre! Dead!

MARTHA  
*(From I-phone)*

Right there Brooklyn Gray! You suck!

GEORGE  
*(From I-phone)*

Suck this!

MARTHA

*(From I-phone)*

That's right! Suck that!

*(Still more ringing in the audience.)*

*(BROOKLYN breaks character.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Pissed, to the audience)*

Do you mind! If you haven't noticed, we're trying to do a play!

*(The audience cell stops ringing.)*

BROOKLYN

*(To the audience)*

Thank you. You know this isn't easy, it takes concentration and, and, and talent!

JOJO

*(Breaking character)*

Let it go.

*(During the following a PERSON FROM THE AUDIENCE walks up on stage and plugs his I-Phone into a socket in the George and Martha living room area.)*

BROOKLYN

*(To the audience)*

There was an announcement made. Turn off your phones!

*(BROOKLYN stops and watches the PERSON FROM AUDIENCE in amazement.)*

BROOKLYN

May I help you?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Huh?

BROOKLYN

What the hell are you...?!

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Oh, phone's dead.

BROOKLYN

We're trying to do a play!

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Yeah, but I need juice.

BROOKLYN

We're acting!

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Seemed like a dull spot, all you were doing was watching the Youtube thing and I thought it was like a twitter break.

BROOKLYN

You can't walk up on stage during a play!

JOJO

He's/She's right.

BROOKLYN

I know I'm right.

JOJO

No, *he's/she's* right. Maybe we should have twitter breaks.

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

And install charging stations under the seats like they do in airports.

JOJO

Basic man, basic.

*(The PERSON FROM AUDIENCE continues to struggle to make his/her phone charge.)*

BROOKLYN

You are aware that's not a real outlet.

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Meaning?

BROOKLYN

It's fake! What did you think I meant?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Thought it was like a philosophical question about life or something.

BROOKLYN

Get off the stage!

*(The PERSON FROM AUDIENCE starts back to his seat.)*

BROOKLYN

*(To Jojo, flustered)*

Where were we?!

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

By the way, when does the singing start?

BROOKLYN

What?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

This is a musical, right?

BROOKLYN

What the hell made you think this was a musical?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Someone said something about music.

BROOKLYN

She's a musical theatre major, it's not a musical! It's a play, a play where people have realistic dialogue.

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Realistic boring dialogue.

*(PERSON FROM THE AUDIENCE starts to leave. Stops.)*

BROOKLYN

Get Off The Stage!

*(The PERSON FROM AUDIENCE exits back into the audience. BROOKLYN tries to pull himself together.)*

JOJO  
*(Out of character)*

You know, it's not such a bad idea. Making it a musical.

BROOKLYN  
We're not making it a musical!

JOJO  
Why not?

BROOKLYN  
Cause musicals are stupid.

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE  
*(O.S.)*  
"Cats" wasn't so bad.

BROOKLYN  
"Cats" is crap! Get out! Can I have an usher please! Out!

*(MR ROGERS leads the PERSON FROM THE AUDIENCE off.)*

MR. ROGERS  
Come on, let them act.

BROOKLYN  
*(Concentration blown)*  
Ah. Where were we?

JOJO  
Don't remember.

BROOKLYN  
Let's just cut to the end of the scene? Take it from your line, ah... "You're right, I cannot be a complete human being if..."

JOJO  
Got it. *(Under her breath)* Asshole.

*(During the following JOJO changes her position on the bed. Gets under the covers.)*

BROOKLYN

*(To the audience)*

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm so sorry for the interruption. At the end of this scene my character gives a long passionate monologue about how people like her have what John Stuart Mill called a "deficiency of imagination." And then there's another long monologue where my character explains to her who John Stuart Mill was. But then she begins to understand how flawed our generation is and then she says...

*(He gets into bed beside her, they pull up the sheets. She messes up her hair. But she's not in character yet.)*

JOJO

*(Not in character)*

Hold on. Let me re-center myself.

*(She centers herself, whatever that is.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Under his breath)*

Come on.

JOJO

Okay. Ready.

*(And we're back into the play)*

JOJO

*(In character)*

You're right, I cannot be a complete human being if I walked out on 'The Producers.'

*(Her phone bings.)*

BROOKLYN

Don't answer.

JOJO

*(Dramatically)*

No, I won't. Nor am I going to blog about it, or Instagram it, or share it on any sort of messaging cloud service. Let's turn the world off and ourselves on.

BROOKLYN

Full frontal mono-tasking?

JOJO

Exactly!

*(They fall into each other's arms. Lights out. Wild porn music blares for a moment, then...)*

*(MR. ROGERS enters and the candy-land lights return.)*

MR. ROGERS

That wasn't very nice of that person walking up on stage during the scene was it.

*(A piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

Oh, did you hear that? That means it's time to put these two scenes together and see what happens. It's the next morning. We're back to George and Martha's apartment. You remember George and Martha? They're high functioning alcoholics. And they have hangovers. Can you say Pedialyte?

MR. ROGERS & AUDIENCE

Pedialyte.

MR. ROGERS

Very good. Let's see what happens.

*(MR. ROGERS steps aside. The lights crash back to reality.)*

*(Badly hungover, MARTHA enters wearing a robe and sucking Pedialyte through a straw.)*

*(Enter George, also wearing a robe, he has a massive headache.)*

GEORGE  
*(Blurry eyed)*

Where am I?

MARTHA  
*(Dizzy)*

Please don't talk.

GEORGE  
My legs, they aren't attached to my body.

MARTHA  
The sound of your voice is killing my brain cells.

*(Ding Dong. Door bell. They check their phones.)*

GEORGE  
Is'at?

MARTHA  
*(Off her phone)*

It's you.

GEORGE  
*(Off his phone)*

It's not me.

*(Ding Dong.)*

MARTHA  
Wait. It's the front door.

GEORGE  
Wow, who comes to doors anymore?

*(GEORGE crosses to the door.)*

GEORGE  
*(Through the door)*

Hello?

Grub-hub. Pizza!

VOICE (OFF)

GEORGE  
*(To Martha, Gressed out)*

Did you order a pizza?

MARTHA

Why would I order pizza at nine o'clock in the morning.

GEORGE  
*(Yelling through the door)*

It's nine in the morning! Why would we order pizza?

VOICE (OFF)

Drake residence?

GEORGE

So?

VOICE (OFF)

George and Martha?

GEORGE

Yeah.

VOICE (OFF)

...Uber Food!

GEORGE

Oh for god sake.

*(GEORGE opens the door to find BROOKLYN holding a pizza box.)*

GEORGE

We didn't order pizza!

BROOKLYN  
*(Vehement)*

In that case, did you order this?

*(BROOKLYN opens the pizza box and takes out a pepperoni covered handgun. MARTHA screams.)*

Holy Crap!

GEORGE

Hands up!

BROOKLYN  
*(Fierce)*

O.M.G.!

MARTHA

GEORGE  
*(Terrified, into his I-phone)*

Siri, how do we get out of a hostage situation?

SIRI

"Okay, here's what I found about hospitals for crustaceans."

Put The Phones Down!

BROOKLYN

What do you want? Money?

GEORGE

I'm your worst nightmare! My name is Brooklyn Gray!

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn who?

MARTHA

Gray!

BROOKLYN

Is that supposed to mean something?

GEORGE

Brooklyn Gray!

BROOKLYN  
*(Insistent)*

So?

GEORGE

The play!

BROOKLYN

MARTHA

What play?

BROOKLYN

Last night! My play, 'Brain Freeze.' You posted a review!

MARTHA

We did?

GEORGE

Ohhhh, he's talking about the YouTube thingy.

MARTHA

*(Dawning on her)*

Ohhhh, we did.

*(MARTHA checks her phone.)*

MARTHA

*(Thrilled)*

O.M.G.! Sweetheart, we've had over a million views! We've gone viral!

BROOKLYN

And because of it my play closed.

MARTHA

And who are you?

BROOKLYN

I'm Brooklyn Gray!

GEORGE

You keep saying that as if it's supposed to mean something.

BROOKLYN

The playwright!

MARTHA

What playwright?

BROOKLYN

"You Suck Brooklyn Gray!"

MARTHA

*(Slowly dawning on her)*

Ohhhhhh, *that* playwright.

GEORGE

Hi. We're George and Martha Drake//

BROOKLYN

*(Losing it)*

I Know Who The Hell You Are!!!

*(BROOKLYN points the gun. GEORGE and MARTHA cower.)*

GEORGE

*(trying to calm Brooklyn)*

Okay, it seems that our little video triggered you.

BROOKLYN

Shut up! Sit down! Drop the phones!

MARTHA

But what do we do with our hands?

BROOKLYN

Drop'em!

*(They put the phones down on the coffee table in front of them. During the following BROOKLYN takes out a half finished 5th of Jim Beam and sucks on it.)*

BROOKLYN

I have something to say and you're going to listen! Is that clear? *(Barking)* Is That Clear?!

GEORGE

*(Terrorized)*

Yes.

BROOKLYN

I need a verbal conformation from both of you!

MARTHA  
*(Terrorized)*

Yes.

BROOKLYN  
 The reason I'm here is to make a point! And that point is! Crap! I forgot my point! Wait. Got it. Take the university I teach at.

MARTHA  
 You're a college professor?

GEORGE  
 Of course he's a college professor, he's a playwright.

MARTHA  
*(scared, trying to be upbeat)*  
 Teaching must be satisfying.

*(Brooklyn goes into a drunken rant,  
 as playwrights do.)*

BROOKLYN  
*(Ranting)*  
 No! It's crap! My department is now live-streaming our shows so the students don't have to show up. They're watching our crappy three hour productions of 'Crucible' from their dorm rooms! John Proctor is wrestling with his very soul and the students are watching while sitting on the toilet! I was directing this production of 'Waiting For Godot'. Got into an argument with this sophomore playing Estragon who said that while he was 'waiting' wouldn't his character check his e-mails!

*(To GEORGE and MARTHA that seems  
 logical.)*

BROOKLYN  
 They made me teach Intro to Theatre! The students act as if I were teaching them a dead language... like English. All they want to talk about is the fact that I once wrote for 'Two and a Half Men'!

GEORGE  
*(Impressed)*  
 You wrote for 'Two and a Half Men'?

MARTHA

*(Impressed)*

Really? Like which ones?

BROOKLYN

Well, there were several. Remember the one where Charlie Sheen babysits monkeys//? *(Losing it)* Shut up!!! It doesn't matter! They're all crap! What I wrote meant nothing! It changed nothing! It had no point! And that's my point! *(Tired from his tirade)* How about that - That was almost a three minute monologue and you listened to the whole damn thing!

GEORGE

But the reason we listened is because you were holding a gun.

BROOKLYN

Are you telling me that if I wasn't you wouldn't have listened?

GEORGE

Probably not. Sweetheart?

MARTHA

The gun was the main reason I listened.

GEORGE

And even with the gun I kinda drifted off half way through.

BROOKLYN

What the hell! Okay okay, when I came in here I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Now I do. Know what we are going to do?! We're going to have a dinner party!

*(He opens the pizza box and tosses pizza onto the coffee table in front of them.)*

BROOKLYN

Start talking!

GEORGE

I don't understand.

BROOKLYN

Talk!

MARTHA

You mean, like, a conversation?

BROOKLYN

Yes! A cohesive dinner party conversation.

GEORGE

But conversations take work.

MARTHA

And we might get bored.

BROOKLYN

*(Ranting)*

You're already bored. Cause you're fed a constant diet of mediocre binge-watching bullshit and meaningless movie prequels! Growing up my middle class parents, do you know what they had on their coffee table? 'Arts and Architecture Magazine'! He was a manic-depressive postman, she a pill popping principal and they read 'Arts and Architecture Magazine'! Well, okay, I don't remember them actually reading it, but it was there! Who does that today? I'm sitting in the airport bar and CNN's reporting that Steven Spielberg is in Cannes. What am I supposed to do with this information?!

*(MARTHA raises her hand, she has a question.)*

BROOKLYN

Why the hell does anyone care what Steven Spielberg is doing? Of course he's in Cannes! Now if he just took a massive dump in the breezeway of the United Nations, that might be news!

*(MARTHA's hand is still up.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Annoyed)*

What?!

MARTHA

Question.

BROOKLYN

I know you got a question, you put your hand up, when people put their hand up that means they have a question! Ask!

MARTHA

Is this going to be another three minute monologue?

BROOKLYN

No!!! *(Pointing the gun)* Shut up and start talking!

GEORGE

But if we talk, like unedited, it means it's all out there.

MARTHA

And we don't know how many exclamation points or smiley faces the other's using.

BROOKLYN

*(Tirade)*

To hell with emojis! You are going to talk for a full ten minutes, six hundred uninterrupted seconds, no phones, no texting, no posting pictures of your food, and if you do that, I will think about not shooting you!

*(GEORGE's phone bings.)*

GEORGE

Is'at?

MARTHA

You.

*(GEORGE goes for his phone.)*

BROOKLYN

Touch it and I'll blow your knuckles off.

GEORGE

But it's a text.

BROOKLYN

Don't answer.

GEORGE

But I have to.

BROOKLYN

Why?

GEORGE

Cause it's a text.

BROOKLYN

Don't answer! Why is that so hard to understand?

GEORGE

I didn't know not answering was an option.

BROOKLYN

*(Pointing the gun)*

Talk!

MARTHA

You mean you want us to use a verbal-alphabet-based form of communication?

BROOKLYN

Yes!

GEORGE

What should we talk about?

BROOKLYN

Life! Politics! God!

GEORGE

For ten contiguous minutes?

BROOKLYN

Yes.

GEORGE

And if we do you'll leave?

BROOKLYN

I'll consider it.

GEORGE

We can do this sweetheart.

MARTHA

You first.

GEORGE

No you.

No you.

MARTHA

Shut up and talk!

BROOKLYN

Okay. Ah... Ah...

GEORGE

Go! Now!

BROOKLYN

It, ah, looks like a nice day.

GEORGE  
*(Fearful)*

No! Say something substantive. Have a meaningful conversation.  
Like you're in a play!

BROOKLYN

Ah...

GEORGE  
*(Terrified)*

Talk!

BROOKLYN

*(BROOKLYN points the gun at him.)*

My uncle died.

GEORGE  
*(Suddenly)*

*(BROOKLYN points the gun at her.)*

Your turn.

BROOKLYN

I... ah... So sorry.

MARTHA  
*(Terrified)*

Now you.

BROOKLYN  
*(To George)*

I... I miss him.

GEORGE

You.

BROOKLYN

Me too.

MARTHA

*(They've run out of things to say.)*

More!

BROOKLYN

I sent flowers.

GEORGE

That's nice.

MARTHA

Yes, it was.

GEORGE

*(Beat.)*

Don't stop!

BROOKLYN

Do you remember the time he took us to the lake?

GEORGE  
*(Desperate, tears)*

I do.

MARTHA  
*(Weeping)*

What did you think about that?

GEORGE

It was a pretty lake.

MARTHA

*(Again the conversation dies.)*

More!

BROOKLYN

GEORGE  
*(Weeping)*

Do you want to talk about the lake some more?

MARTHA  
*(Weeping)*

Yes, I like to talk about lakes in general.

GEORGE  
 Did you know that Lake Superior in Michigan is the largest fresh water lake in the world?

MARTHA  
 Did not know. Where did you read that?

GEORGE  
 I read it on//.

*(BROOKLYN points the gun at GEORGE's crotch.)*

BROOKLYN  
 Say "Wikipedia" and I'll blow your nuts off.

GEORGE  
*(Crying)*  
 In a... a... book?

BROOKLYN  
 Okay, stop! Your dialogue sounds like it was written by Annie Baker. Do better! Go!

GEORGE  
 Ah... Ah...

BROOKLYN  
 Now!

GEORGE  
 I have webbed toes. But only on my right foot.

MARTHA  
 Do you swim in circles?

BROOKLYN  
 No! Reveal something about your very soul!

GEORGE  
Ah...

BROOKLYN  
Ten seconds.

GEORGE  
Ah...

BROOKLYN  
Five, four, three, two.

GEORGE  
*(Blurting out)*  
I have a fear of commitment!

MARTHA  
...What?

GEORGE  
That's why I don't want children.

MARTHA  
You never told me this.

GEORGE  
Every time you talk about children I get this sinking feeling  
cause it means real commitment and I'm not sure I'm ready.

MARTHA  
But you married me.

GEORGE  
Yes, but I was high on cough syrup.

MARTHA  
What?

GEORGE  
Remember when I was late for the ceremony, I said I was  
playing Pokémon Shuffle - I wasn't, in fact I was having a  
bad trip.

MARTHA  
What are you saying, that I forced you to marry me?

GEORGE

No, but I could've used a little more time.

MARTHA

You lied to me!

BROOKLYN

Much better//

MARTHA

*(To Brooklyn, pissed)*

Shut up, we're trying to have a conversation! *(To George)* Why didn't you say this before?

GEORGE

You were rather insistent.

MARTHA

Might I remind you that *you* asked *me* to marry you!

GEORGE

Yes, but you gave me no choice.

MARTHA

What are you saying? That I denied you free will?

GEORGE

Why do you do this? Why can't we just talk without you getting all pissy!

MARTHA

You bastard! I want a divorce!

GEORGE

Fine with me!

MARTHA

Fine with me too!

GEORGE

G.T.F.O.!

MARTHA

No you G.T.F.O.!

*(GEORGE and MARTHA pout. Beat.)*

BROOKLYN

*(Looking at his watch)*

That was only four minutes. You have to talk for six more.

MARTHA

Got nothing to say!

GEORGE

Me either.

BROOKLYN

You got no choice, you have to talk for another six minutes or die. Now! Go!

*(BROOKLYN points the gun. GEORGE cowers.)*

GEORGE

Ah... Ah... I... I like going to the lake//

BROOKLYN

No! About your divorce!

GEORGE

What else is there to say?!

BROOKLYN

Talk! Now!

*(He's about to pull the trigger when...)*

*(Ding Dong.)*

VOICE (O.S.)

Grub-hub! Pizza!

BROOKLYN

What the hell? Did you really order pizza?

MARTHA

*(Weeping, pissed)*

It's nine o'clock in the morning why the hell would we order pizza?!

*(BROOKLYN crosses to the door.)*

BROOKLYN  
*(Through the door)*

No one here ordered pizza.

VOICE (OFF)

Drake residence?

BROOKLYN (V.O.)  
*(Through the door)*

So?

VOICE (OFF)

George and Martha?

BROOKLYN  
*(Through the door)*

Yeah.

*(Beat.)*

VOICE (OFF)

...Grub-hub!

*(BROOKLYN opens the door.)*

BROOKLYN  
 I tell you they didn't order//

*(JOJO bursts in with a handgun and points it at BROOKLYN.)*

Freeze!

JOJO

Freeze!

BROOKLYN

Put the gun down or I'll shoot!

JOJO

Not before I shoot them.

BROOKLYN

*(A stand off.)*

MARTHA  
*(Tears)*

What do you want?

JOJO  
 I've come to stop this bullcrap! Martha, George, you're right, theatre's dead!

GEORGE  
*(Terrified)*  
 You mean like spoken theatre?

JOJO  
 Yes, spoken theatre, boring theatre, it be dead! Cover me.

*(JOJO throws guns to MARTHA and GEORGE. They point the guns at her.)*

JOJO  
 Not me! Him!

*(They point the guns at BROOKLYN. It's a four-way stand off.)*

BROOKLYN  
 What the hell are you doing?!

JOJO  
 It really triggered me when you made those disparaging remarks about 'Cats'.

BROOKLYN  
 What?

JOJO  
 It just wasn't fair. Everyone likes musical theatre - Right?

*(She points the gun at GEORGE and MARTHA.)*

GEORGE & MARTHA  
 Right.

JOJO  
 So we're going to stop the play so I can call my therapist.

MARTHA

*(Desperate)*

That's a great idea, it would give me time to call my anxiety coach.

GEORGE

*(Distraught)*

And I could take my Zoloft-Prozac cocktail.

JOJO

And so could the audience. So we're going to take an intermission!

BROOKLYN

But this play doesn't have an intermission!

JOJO

And when we get back this play's going to be a musical! Know why?

MARTHA

*(Still weeping)*

Cause musical theatre people care?

JOJO

That's right. *(To the audience)* We will now take a five minute intermission!

BROOKLYN

I'm telling you, dammit, there's no intermission in this play!

JOJO

You're right! Intermissions are dead! *(To the audience)* Tonight we're gonna introduce you to the replacement for intermissions! For the next few minutes. Turn on your phones! Check your messages! Make a bathroom run! Call your therapist! Take your Zoloft-Prozac cocktail. Ladies and gentleman, we will now take a Twitter Break!

(Twitter Break)

*(The theme from the game show 'Jeopardy' plays, then turns into a wild rock and roll version.)*

*(The actors fall out of character and check their messages, Jojo calls her therapist and ad-libs a conversation, and MARTHA and GEORGE take pills. Cast members might visit with the audience, even offer them Cheetos.)*

*(Please note: If the audience leaves the theatre they must re-enter through metal detectors.)*

*(A few minutes later...)*

(End Of Twitter Break)

*(Candy-land lights up. A piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(To the audience)*

Welcome back boys and girls. The director of the play wants you to know that 'Mr. Rogers, American Terminator' has its own Facebook page. Tonight after the show he/she invites you to upload your own original hateful, abusive drunken reviews, just as George and Martha did at the beginning. But if you do so, be sure to obey Facebook's terms of service agreement which I'm sure you've all read.

*(Please note: wouldn't it be great to play these abusive You Tube reviews in the lobby after the show?)*

MR. ROGERS

*(To the audience)*

Some of you might've felt a little anxiety during the first part of this play. It's filled with guns, alcoholics, a neurotic playwright and musical theatre major. And to be honest even Mr. Rogers is beginning to get a little gloomy. Does anyone know how to cheer Mr. Rogers up?

*(The piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

Oh. Did you hear that? That means Mr. Rogers got a twitter. Would you like me to read it?

*(He prompts the audience to answer. No matter how the audience reacts he says...)*

MR. ROGERS

My pleasure. Just let me take out Mr. Smart Phone.

*(Mr. ROGERS fumbles with his smart phone and reads.)*

MR. ROGERS

Mr. Rogers is not sure how this works.

*(MARTHA steps over and helps him.)*

MR. ROGERS

Thank you. It feels good to help other people doesn't it?

MARTHA

*(Noncommittal)*

Whatever.

MR. ROGERS

*(To the audience)*

Oh look, someone in the audience twittered. It reads, "How the heck are you getting away with this? Isn't Mr. Rogers copyrighted material?" *(To the audience)* Sure is, but the United States Supreme Court ruled in Hustler Magazine vs. Jerry Falwell that the first and fourteenth Amendments protects anyone from recovering damages for emotional distress caused by caricature, parody or satire. Can we all say 'thank you Hustler Magazine?' Thank you...

*(He prompts the audience.)*

MR. ROGERS & AUDIENCE

Hustler Magazine.

*(A piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

Oh, it's another twitter from an audience member. (*Reading from his phone*). This one's from Happy-Patti, it reads (*Reading*) "I know how to cheer Mr. Rogers up. How bout if the musical theatre major sings." Why that's a wonderful idea! Musicals are fun and toe-tapping. Do you know how to tap your toes? I'm sure you do. (*To Jojo*) Miss actress playing Jojo, can you really sing?

JOJO

Like duh.

MR. ROGERS

Would you be so kind as to sing us a happy musical theatre song?

JOJO

Sure.

*(She centers herself.)*

MR. ROGERS

What are you doing?

JOJO

I'm centering myself. I'm a method actor.

MR. ROGERS

What does that mean?

BROOKLYN

*(From the side)*

It means it takes her two rehearsals to do what other actors do in one.

*(JOJO flips off BROOKLYN)*

MR. ROGERS

Wait, I think I heard about method acting. Wasn't that taught by someone named... Stanislavsky.

JOJO

*(Centering herself)*

Bingo.

*(Finally she's ready. A piano flair, if needed an actor hands JoJo a mic. If the actor playing Mr. ROGERS plays the piano it would be nice if he did the honors.)*

MR. ROGERS  
*(To audience)*

Okay, I think she's ready. Let's listen.

JOJO

I'd like to sing a song about what it's like to be an actress in the modern theatre.

MR. ROGERS  
*(To the audience)*

That sounds like fun. It must be wonderful to be an actress. This'll cheer us up.

*(Piano tinkles, it's a pretty song, JOJO sings.)*

JOJO  
*(Sweetly singing)*

I WAS REHEARSING BYE BYE BIRDIE  
WHEN THE DIRECTOR SAID KISS THIS GUY  
MAKE IT REAL, HE SAID, MAKE IT SLURPEE  
TO KEEP MY JOB I HAD TO COMPLY

THE ACTOR WAS SHAPED LIKE A TURKEY  
HIS LIPS TASTED OF PROCESSED CHEESE  
HIS PITS SMELLED OF BEEF JERKY  
BUT METHOD ACTING TAUGHT ME TO PLEASE

*(The song goes loud and angry.)*

STANISLAVSKY GAVE ME HERPES  
AND A CASE OF TOOTH DECAY  
STANISLAVSKY GAVE ME HERPES  
BUT I GOT THIS GREAT RESUME

*(MARTHA joins JOJO.)*

JOJO AND MARTHA  
THE CASTING COUCH HAS GOT TO STOP  
AND ALL THE CONTROVERSIES

CAUSE AN ACTRESS IS NOT A PROP  
STANISLAVSKY GAVE ME HERPESSSSSSSS!

JOJO  
*(Pissed off)*

Screw you Harvey Weinstein!

MARTHA

And you too Bill Cosby!

JOJO

And Bill O'Reilly!

MARTHA

And Bill Clinton!

JOJO

What Do We Want!

JOJO & MARTHA

Justice!

MARTHA

When Do We Want It?!

JOJO & MARTHA

Now!

JOJO

What Do We Want?

JOJO & MARTHA

Equality!

MARTHA

When Do We Want It?!

JOJO & MARTHA

Now!

*(JOJO AND MARTHA chest bump and  
high five.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Starting to get depressed)*

Wasn't that fun and toe-tapping, but Mr. Rogers was looking for something irrelevant like 'Cats.'

*(A piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

Oh, we have another tweeter-er. *(Looking at his phone)* This one is from Ms. PhD-lit-crit. She writes, *(Reading)* "What the hell's going on? What happened to the hostage drama play? Theme unclear." You know Dr. Lit-crit, it's okay to feel confused. When you feel confused, just ask for help. Is there anyone who can help Dr. Lit-crit?

*(GEORGE & BROOKLYN step forward. BROOKLYN is carrying an easel with several large sheets of poster board bearing Venn Circles.)*

GEORGE

We'd be happy to mansplain.

*(BROOKLYN sets up the easel.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Off Venn Circles)*

Oh, what are these?

BROOKLYN

These are Venn circles.

MR. ROGERS

Venn Circles, how do they work?

BROOKLYN

We'll show you.

*(BROOKLYN turns to the first large card. It has two Venn circles. In one is a picture of a "Duck." In the other a picture of a "Beaver.")*

BROOKLYN

In this circle we have...

MR. ROGERS  
A duck.

BROOKLYN  
And in this one...

MR. ROGERS  
A Beaver.

BROOKLYN  
Overlap them and you get...

*(BROOKLYN flips to the next card.  
The Venn circles overlap and in the  
joined area we see a grinning  
platypus.)*

MR. ROGERS  
Platypus! Oh, I get it. And you call these Venn Circles? *(To  
the audience)* Isn't that interesting.

BROOKLYN  
We'll now use these circles to mansplain the play.

*(BROOKLYN flips to a page with four  
Venn circles containing a bottle of  
booze, a bag of Cheetos, a picture  
of Bertolt Brecht and a smart  
phone.)*

BROOKLYN  
We started in George and Martha's apartment, represented by  
this circle here.

*(He points at a Venn Circle with a  
bottle of booze.)*

GEORGE  
Then there was the Brooklyn and Jojo one night stand scene.

*(He points at a Venn Circle with a  
bag of Cheetos.)*

BROOKLYN  
But that was interrupted by the person from the audience.

*(He points at a Venn Circle with a picture of a smart phone.)*

BROOKLYN

Which caused Brechtian alienation.

*(He points at a Venn Circle with a picture of Bertolt Brecht.)*

GEORGE

The result was...

*(GEORGE flips to the next page where the Venn Circles overlap. In the center is a photo of people wearing n95 masks.)*

BROOKLYN

Modern life.

MR. ROGERS

Boys and girls, isn't that interesting?

*(GEORGE flips to a massively confusing diagram filled with absolutely impossible-to-follow arrows and Venn circles filled with school shootings, dollar bills, North Korean missiles, viruses, the musical 'Cats' and a lot of other horrible crap.)*

GEORGE

*(Pointing at Venn circles)*

You see, modern life decreases our ability to synthesize existence into any kind of coherent narrative thread.

BROOKLYN

There's no plot to life.

GEORGE

So why should the theatre make use of plot?

BROOKLYN

*(Pointing at a Venn circle)*

So our play became nothing more than unrelated moments.

GEORGE

*(Pointing at a Venn circle)*

Which resulted in a violent hostage standoff.

BROOKLYN

*(Pointing at a Venn circle)*

Which led to narcissism.

GEORGE

*(Pointing at a Venn circle)*

Chronic anxiety.

BROOKLYN

*(Pointing at the 'Cats' Venn circle)*

And thus musical theatre.

MR. ROGERS

*(Totally confused)*

Thank you for mansplaining.

BROOKLYN

You're welcome.

MR. ROGERS

But Mr. Rogers is more confused than before.

*(A piano tinkles.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Checking his phone)*

Oh, I do hope this is something that will make Mr. Rogers feel happy. It's from Gabrielle who writes, "I would like to see Brooklyn Gray's play 'Brain Freeze.' That's a wonderful idea. *(To the audience)* Would you like to see the actors do a little reading from Mr. Gray's play?"

*(He prompts the audience to answer. No matter how the audience reacts, he says...)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Upbeat)*

I knew you would. Actors, would you be so kind?

*(The actors ad-lib. Sure.)*

MR. ROGERS

I assume from the title it is a play about ice cream. I like ice cream, do you?

*(The actors grab stools, scripts and music stands to set the stage for a play reading.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(To the audience)*

Oh this is so exciting. I've never been to a reading of a play before. Look, there's the playwright. Mr. Playwright, would you be so kind as to speak with us?

*(BROOKLYN joins Mr. ROGERS.)*

BROOKLYN

Sure.

MR. ROGERS

So you wrote this play.

BROOKLYN

Yeah.

MR. ROGERS

What's it about?

BROOKLYN

It's about a woman who brings home her lover to meet her parents in the year 2055.

MR. ROGERS

Is it hard to write a play?

BROOKLYN

No, it's easy, you just sit and stare at the empty page until your sciatica becomes so painful you need a triple spinal fusion.

MR. ROGERS

I had no idea so much was involved.

MARTHA

Problem, we don't have anyone to read the stage directions.

BROOKLYN

Mr. Rogers?

MR. ROGERS

I'd be happy to help. *(To the audience)* It's always nice to help people. It makes you feel warm inside.

*(MR. ROGERS and the actors take their places for the reading.)*

*(Lights up on the reading.)*

JOJO

Hi, my name is Jojo and I'll be reading the role of Millie.

GEORGE

My name is George and I'll be reading Rob.

MARTHA

I'm Martha and I'll be reading Laura.

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn and I'll be reading Jerry.

MR. ROGERS

And my name is Mr. Rogers and I'll be reading the stage directions.

*(During the following Mr. ROGERS reads the stage directions as if it were a children's book.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Upbeat, reading stage directions)*

'Brain Freeze' by Brooklyn Gray. Place: A burnt out wreckage that was once a living room. The table is set for a dinner party. Time: The not so distant future. Laura enters, wearing a scorched apron. Her hair is falling out."

LAURA

*(Reading Sing-song)*

"Sweetheart, it's nearly eight."

MR. ROGERS

"Robert, her husband enters. He's a Fukushima nuclear disaster victim. He puts on an acid burned tie.

LAURA

"You're not wearing *that* tie."

ROBERT

"What's wrong with it?"

LAURA

"It's our first meet-and-greet and I want to impress."

ROBERT

"Has she said anything about him?"

LAURA

"Only that he's a nice man, a bit neurotic and gluten intolerant. Change your tie."

ROBERT

"I just hope they can make it through the dead zone."

LAURA

"Last year she found her way through the radiation pool, she can handle a little dead zone."

MR. ROGERS

"Ding Dong. Door bell."

LAURA

"That's her. Change the tie."

MR. ROGERS

"Robert exits taking off his tie."

LAURA

*(Sing-song)*

"Coming."

MR. ROGERS

"She opens the door to find Millie, her daughter who suffers from facial tumor syndrome."

MILLIE

"Hi Mom!"

LAURA

"Millie! Sweetheart. Before I let you in, have you been vaccinated?"

MILLIE

"Oh, funny one, Mom, you know vaccinations don't work anymore."

*(They laugh at Millie's joke.)*

MILLIE

"I've got great news - Jerry proposed. Isn't that wonderful?"

LAURA

"I don't know, I haven't met him yet."

MILLIE

"There's more. We got married."

LAURA

*(Dumbfounded)*

"You what?"

MILLIE

"An hour ago."

LAURA

"Where?"

MILLIE

"We found a priest who was giving last rites to some radiation victims and asked if he could spare a minute. Mama, you're going to love Jerry// Oh, here he comes."

MR. ROGERS

*(Becoming depressed)*

"Jerry enters, he suffers from a skin infection caused by uranium poisoning. He carries two suitcases that are still smoldering from a terrorist attack."

MILLIE

"Mom, meet my Jerry."

LAURA

"A pleasure// Oh dear, what happened to your luggage?"

MILLIE

*(Matter-of-factly)*

"We were attacked by genetically modified mutants but the Uber driver fought'em off."

JERRY

"Nice to meet you."

LAURA

"Come in. Gluten-free cracker?"

MILLIE

"Mom, I thought I warned you, Jerry's allergic to gluten-free."

LAURA

"Allergic to gluten-free?"

MILLIE

"Everything he eats must contain gluten or his brain swells and his rectum pops."

LAURA

"Oh. How did you meet?"

MILLIE

"We were both on the same war tour."

LAURA

"Oh. Did you see dead bodies?"

MILLIE

"And collected lots of shrapnel."

MR. ROGERS

*(Getting more depressed)*

"Robert enters putting on a different burned tie."

ROBERT

*(looking at his phone)*

I just got a text, there's na active shooter one block over.

LAURA

Oh, not a problem he was there last week

MILLIE

"Daddy! Meet Jerry... *my husband.*"

ROBERT

*(Pissed off)*

"Your what?"

MILLIE

"You heard me."

ROBERT

*(Pissed, to Jerry)*

"Let's just cut to the chase. Is my daughter pregnant?"

MILLIE

"Daddy, I'm not pregnant. Jerry and I can't have children."

LAURA

"Sorry to hear that."

MILLIE

"It's not what you think. Jerry's allergic to stem cells."

MR. ROGERS

"The living room is shaken by a deep rumble."

LAURA

"Hold on, it's just a frack-quake."

MR. ROGERS

*(More depressed)*

"The rumbling subsides."

ROBERT

*(Disdainful)*

"So, Jerry, is'at your name? What do you do for a living?"

JERRY

"I'm a climatologist."

ROBERT

"A what?"

MILLIE

"He studies climate change, Daddy."

JERRY

"Carbon dioxide levels have reached heights not seen for three million years."

LAURA

"Well, that's kinda depressing. Let's talk about something positive. *(Upbeat)* So you made it through the dead zone."

JERRY

"We're facing the greatest mass extinction since the dinosaurs."

LAURA

"Micro-plastic-pellet-free cucumber sandwich?"

*(During the following Mr. ROGERS becomes more and more depressed. He puts his head on the music stand.)*

JERRY

"We are living in the last-best days of the earth. Soon biological metamorphosis will radically transform the planet, beyond freak storms, dead zones, heat waves, wildfires, brown outs, black outs, die-offs, monsoons, and typhoons."

MILLIE

*(Upbeat)*

"Don't forget fracking tsunamis, sweetheart."

JERRY

"And fracking tsunamis!"

LAURA

"Tell you what, let's all have ice cream!"

MILLIE

"I love Ice cream."

JERRY

Oh, I can't it give me brain freeze//

*(Mr. ROGERS stops the reading.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Shaken, depressed)*

Stop! *(Pulling himself together)* Mr. Rogers is feeling a bit...

JOJO

Sad?

MR. ROGERS

Sad, *(To the audience)* It's okay to feel sad. It's what we do when we feel sad that matters.

**(MORE)**

## MR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Why don't we have these nice actors put the music stands away while we think positive thoughts.

*(During the following the actors clear the music stands and stools.)*

MR. ROGERS

*(Glum, to the audience)*

So, boys and girls, how do we deal with modern reality? Suggestions? Anyone?

*(MR. ROGERS prompts the audience for answers. He ad-libs with the audience for a while about modern life. Then...)*

*(The actors reenter with their guns.)*

BROOKLYN

Mr. Rogers if you don't mind we need to finish the hostage drama.

MR. ROGERS

I'm not so sure we should. How does it end?

JOJO

Oh. I shoot Brooklyn, but I only wing him.

MARTHA

Then I shoot Jojo and George when I discover they're having an affair.

BROOKLYN

And then I shoot Martha because she made fun of my play.

MR. ROGERS

So the playwright is the only one left standing?

JOJO

Oh no. Then a real Grub-hub driver arrives. When he finds out that Brooklyn wrote 'Brain Freeze' he shoots him so that he won't be able to write another play

MARTHA

Fade out, the end.

MR. ROGERS

But... Why? What does that prove?

GEORGE

That life is filled with stupidity.

BROOKLYN

Violence.

JOJO

Chronic boredom.

BROOKLYN

And thus, it's all tragically absurd.

MR. ROGERS

*(To the audience, desperate)*

But don't you see, it's easy to prove that. What's hard is making life *not* absurd. *(To the audience)* People, it doesn't have to be this way. It doesn't have to be oversized and centralized, faceless and loveless. And filled with anxiety. True, you have employment, but in fact most of you are unemployed when it comes to meaningful work. You have great wonders in health care but it's only interested in making a fast buck. You live in the information age but you don't have to be dominated by algorithms that create stupidity. You don't have to have a political system that eliminates decorum and normalizes qualities once attributed to psychopaths and narcissists. Just think how that affects the children? A study from World Health Organization reports that the US now ranks 39th in children's survival, health, education and nutrition. Are you kidding me? 39th? What are we doing? Not long ago there was a mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue which is located only three blocks away from my real life house in Pittsburgh. Yes, you live in an age when there are mass shootings in Mr. Roger's neighborhood. Did you know that MRIs show that subjects who multi-task have lower brain density in the anterior cingulate cortex. The anterior cingulate is responsible for empathy. If you lack empathy a whole bunch of things start dying, like love, and making love, and listening to your children. It also means the end of the theatre, because, just as with this play, the fractured events that make up our lives multiply without adding up to a plot.

(MORE)

## MR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Yes, life is tragic, but we can, as Nietzsche said, have a "Tragic optimism" about life where we accept its struggles without becoming apathetic, cynical, or wasted. Together we can change things.

(Please note: Feel free to update this speech and include current events and thoughts about how horrible modern life is.)

MR. ROGERS

IT'S SUCH A GOOD FEELING  
TO KNOW YOU'RE ALIVE  
IT'S SUCH A HAPPY FEELING//

*(He stops, considers the audience.  
Then the cast with their guns.  
Beat.)*

MR. ROGERS

Ah, to hell with it.

*(Mr. ROGERS walks out through the  
audience and leaves the theatre.)*

*(The cast is dumfounded.)*

MARTHA  
*(Amazed)*

Wow.

GEORGE  
*(Equally amazed)*

I know, Mr. Rogers walked out on us.

MARTHA

No, the audience just sat through a three minute speech! Give yourself a round of applause!

*(The cast cheers and high-fives.  
Perhaps they even high-five the  
audience.)*

BROOKLYN

Wait wait wait. We have a real problem here, we've lost our narrator. *(Calling up to the light booth.)* Stage Manger, could you get Mr. Rogers back in here.

STAGE MANAGER

*(Over the speakers)*

Sorry, Mr. Rogers died over twenty years ago. He's left the building.

BROOKLYN

But how do we make it through life without a narrator?

*(MAN/WOMAN from the audience steps up again.)*

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

I'll do it. *(To the audience)* Hello, everyone.

BROOKLYN

Oh god, not you again.

PERSON FROM THE AUDIENCE

*(To the audience)*

My name is *(Fill in a name)* and I'm the VP of product development at Google.

BROOKLYN

Wait, you're a Vice President at Google?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Yeah. *(To the audience)* You've all heard of Google Maps, Google Translate and all the other fine Google products?

CAST

*(ad-libbing)*

Of course.

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Well, tonight, straight from the Googleplex in Mountain View, California I introduce... Google Theatre!

BROOKLYN

Google's into theatre?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

At Google we're dedicated to progress, people and new play development. Haven't you ever said to yourself we need a new kinda of theatre, a theatre that appeals to anxiety filled, multitasking Instagram addicts who demand instant gratification.

**(MORE)**

## PERSON FROM AUDIENCE (CONT'D)

A theatre that allows you to kinda pay attention while gaming or texting. So tonight Google introduces A.D.D. Theatre!

GEORGE

A.D.D.?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Attention Deficit Drama! Theatre that gives the audience exactly what they want, not a bunch of crap some alcoholic playwright labored for months to write in a Starbucks.

BROOKLYN

But how does Google Theatre know *exactly* what this particular audience wants?

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Those weren't metal detectors you walked through when you entered! They were Google Scantron-Five-Thousands. They scanned your phones, credit cards and D.N.A. Google now knows who your friends are, your politics, and your credit rating. So tonight using this mined-data, algorithms and a little help from people who once worked for Cambridge Analytica we'll give you an ending designed especially for you. Actors, places!

*(The actors take their places for the final scene.)*

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

Terms of service agreement.

*(The PERSON FROM THE AUDIENCE opens his/her mouth and a prerecorded, hyper-fast terms of service agreement plays. All we can make out is that it sounds German-ish)*

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

*(Prerecorded, mega fast)*

Wenn es sich in der Welt unserer gegenwärtigen parlamentarischen Korruption immer mehr des tiefsten Wesens seines Kampfes bewusst wird, sich als die reinste Verkörperung des Wertes von Rasse und Persönlichkeit fühlt und sich dementsprechend verhält, wird es dies mit fast mathematischer Sicherheit tun eines Tages siegreich aus seinem Kampf hervorgehen.

*Please Note: Yep, that's from  
Hitler's 'Mei Kampf.'*

*(The recording ends.)*

PERSON FROM AUDIENCE

*(To the audience)*

Agree? Thank you. Ladies and Gentlemen we now present the Google approved ending. Time: Today. Setting: Outside a revival movie house showing Mel Brook's 'The Producers.'

*(The lights and music go all romantic. BROOKLYN steps into a rosy pool of light.)*

BROOKLYN

*(To the audience)*

Interestingly, however, I did run into Jojo again. When we met she was, of all things, coming out of Mel Brooke's 'The Producers.' Which I counted as a personal triumph.

*(JOJO enters with GEORGE and MARTHA, they're on a tri-date.)*

JOJO

*(Happy to see him)*

Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN

Jojo.

JOJO

What a surprise.

BROOKLYN

Who are they?

JOJO

Oh, these are my new lovers, George and Martha. We met on Tinder-Three-Way. George, Martha, this is Brooklyn, my old mono-lover.

MARTHA

O.M.G. You're the playwright who held us at gun point!

GEORGE

*(Into phone)*

Siri, what should I do when I bump into a crazed playwright who held me hostage?

SIRI FROM PHONE

"Okay here's what I found for what should I do when I bump into a white knight and expel a sausage."

BROOKLYN

Please don't be afraid. I'm back online.

JOJO

*(Impressed)*

What?

BROOKLYN

I downloaded a new mental health app specifically designed to help depressive playwrights maintain emotional regularity.

JOJO

So you're re-connected?

BROOKLYN

I even sold my typewriter.

JOJO

That's so lit.

BROOKLYN

You went to 'The Producers'?

JOJO

Almost all of it, almost all the way through.

BROOKLYN

And...?

JOJO

It was kinda okay. I've never seen a movie before where non-zombie-types actually talk to each other for extended periods. It was so Charles Dickens.

BROOKLYN

Why don't you dump these losers and you and I go to dinner.

JOJO

And take pictures of our food?

BROOKLYN

And text and tweet and never acknowledge the other's existence.

JOJO

Love to! George, Martha, goodbye.

*(Insulted, GEORGE and MARTHA exit.)*

*(JOJO and BROOKLYN alone in a pool of light. The music swells.)*

JOJO

I always knew we'd have a happy ending, so that I won't have to think about how screwed up the world is.

BROOKLYN

That's why we go to the theatre to escape the stubborn facts of reality.

JOJO

Love you Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN

Love you Jojo.

JOJO

What do we say now?

BROOKLYN

I don't know, there's no more script left.

*(They hug. It's a wonderful totally fake Rom-com ending.)*

*(Except, while in each other's arms, behind the other's back, JOJO and BROOKLYN check their messages on their smart phones.)*

*(The lights fade.)*

The End  
(Wait, there's more)

Optional Final Song

*(The whole cast comes out for a big  
musical theatre number.)*

CAST

CATS!  
CATS IS THE END OF THE LINE  
THERE WILL NEVER BE  
A BETTER THING TO SEE,  
AND THAT'S FINE  
THE LANGUAGE OF "CATS" IS MUSIC,  
AND MUSIC IS UNIVERSAL  
THAT'S WHY ANDREW LLOYD  
STEALS FROM PUCCINI AND PURCEL  
NOT THAT ANYONE WOULD NOTICE  
NOT THAT ANYONE WOULD CARE  
IF MUSICALS NEEDED ORIGINAL MUSIC,  
BROADWAY WOULDN'T BE THERE!  
CATS! IS GREAT.  
IT'S SO FUN AND CLEVER  
AND BECAUSE IT'S ABOUT NOTHING,  
IT WILL RUN FOR-EVER!

*(Big Finish. Jazz hands.)*

*(Black out.)*

That's All Folks