

Twenty-Five Tens

Kyle Reynolds Conway

The Twenty-Five Tens Project

Kyle Reynolds Conway

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These are the collected plays from the *Twenty-five Tens Project*
@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

What is this all about?

I'm looking to test some writing exercises I devised over the past year: I need your help.

I spent five weeks writing twenty-five ten-minute plays. Each weekday (for five weeks) I released one play a day on the #2510's website. Each week included one original work and four derivative works branching off of the original (each employing a different exercise — more on that later).

Won't that be a lot of reading?

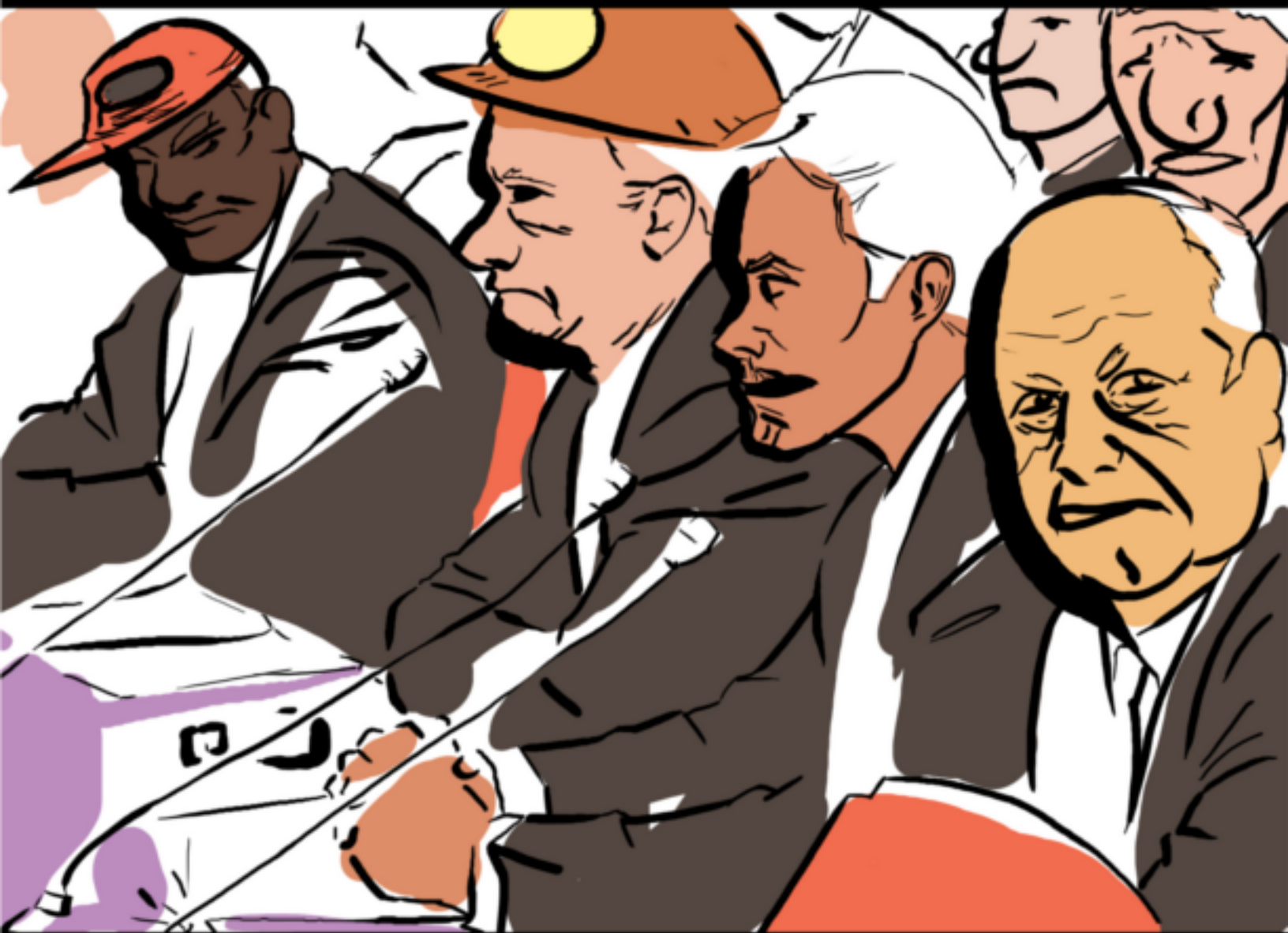
Playwriting is not (inherently) an internet friendly medium. It will likely take an hour each week to read all the material. I'm hoping you'll take the time to read the plays and give me some feedback in a variety of forms (visit the website for more info). Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time. You can read and respond to some plays but not others. I will use the results for a research study.

How do I give feedback?

1. Questionnaires For each play (all 25 of them) there will be a questionnaire (see individual weeks on the website). There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, just what you think. If you want to skip a question for any reason, feel free. If you would prefer not to answer a question, please leave it blank. I will not be able to identify you individually via this method of feedback. The data will be used in aggregate.
2. Comments The comments section of the website will allow for open commentary about the plays, the project, etc. Any feedback appreciated. You will be identifiable via this method (your name, handle, website, etc. depending). Keep it civil, please.
3. Other You might choose to contact me via e-mail, tweet or tweet about this project, write a blog post, remix one of my plays, produce it, etc. As my plays will be released CC BY-SA you should probably check that license out. In all other circumstances, fair use rules apply. If you put it out for public consumption (via a blog, social networking, or similar) I'll likely quote the author with a link to the website, image, video, tweet, or tweet, etc. If you send me an e-mail I will keep your identity confidential unless you would like to be acknowledged or associated with your responses. None of this is scary. It's 21st century communication in action. I'd love any feedback of this sort too.

Anything else?

- Please do things with these works. You already have permission.
- Please attribute the original work(s) to me and include a link to these websites:
Kyle Reynolds Conway
<http://www.kylerconway.wordpress.com>
<https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com>
- If you have any additional questions about this study, please contact me or Norman Bert at norman.bert@ttu.edu
Sincerest thanks for helping us with this research. KYLE



THE PROGRESS OF CONFUSION

KYLE REYNOLDS CONWAY

The Progress of Confusion 1.0

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

REPRESENTATIVE

Representative of *the People*.

LOBBY

Lobbyist for an Industry.

TECHNOLOGY

A Technology Enthusiast.

PROFESSOR

A Professor.

ARTIST, MINISTER, COLLEGE STUDENT, MAILMAN, ATHLETE, AUDIENCE, MOTHER

All of us.

Sources

THE FIRST SECTION, "THE PUBLIC," QUOTES HEAVILY FROM THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS:

http://www.archive.org/details/QuestionCopyright.org_interviews_Chicago_2006

The Public

Fast transitions with light. Filmic. Various members of the public being interviewed individually by a camera. They are not in the same room with one another. Speaking to a camera. "WHAT IS COPYRIGHT?" is visible somewhere.

MOTHER

So nobody else steals what somebody originally created.

COLLEGE STUDENT

To ensure that works created are not used illegally, like, if someone comes up with an original idea or thought, or some sort of original work, that they should be credited for it always.

ATHLETE

Mainly so people don't try to take other people's ideas.

ARTIST

To protect the person who's invented or has come up with the basic idea, so copyright is supposed to, basically give them, I guess ownership of it, the actual idea, or invention or whatever it is basically.

MINISTER

The right of the person who, actually I need think about that uh, the right of the person who created the copy, to benefit from it, and protect them.

MAILMAN

To provide a limited monopoly on a specific expression of ideas to encourage creativity, so that, um, you know, someone, in the short term, has an incentive to create something.

"PROTECTION FROM WHAT?" is clearly visible somewhere.

ARTIST

Well, protection from somebody else, maybe, uh, getting a hold of their idea and claiming it as their own. Uh, protection from, I guess, uh, I guess protection is the best word to use.

*“HOW LONG HAS COPYRIGHT EXISTED? WHAT IS ITS HISTORY?”
is clearly visible somewhere.*

ARTIST

I have no idea about that.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Uh, I would imagine that it probably came about in the early, uh, twentieth century. But that’s just a guess.

MINISTER

No clue. I suspect a long time, but I couldn’t begin to tell you.

ATHLETE

Oh, for crying out loud. Um, I’ve seen books that, copyright goes back as far as... the... mid-thirties.

MAILMAN

Well, I, I mean I know that it’s in the constitution, that, that representative was supposed to enact laws, so, so I guess it goes at least that long.

“DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO SWAPS COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS OVER THE INTERNET?” is clearly visible somewhere.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Yes.

ARTIST

No, most everybody I know does it the legal way. I couldn’t really tell you anybody that uh, off the top of my head, that I know downloads illegally, or steals music.

MINISTER

Absolutely.

MAILMAN

Absolutely! Sure. Absolutely. Tons of people! Everybody does it.

“HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS FILESHARING?” is clearly visible somewhere.

MAILMAN

Uh, you know, honestly... I guess I have some mixed feelings about it because... on the one hand, the big media companies, I'd sure like to see them get screwed, and the idea that somehow they're standing up for the artist is just hogwash, you know, since they've done everything they can to screw the artist all along, with, you know, curious accounting, and stuff like that. But at the same time, you know, I can see that if you were just a small or independant, it could, you know, run into, you know, problems.

COLLEGE STUDENT

I have mixed emotions about it, I mean I suppose, morally, I would think that, I think that it's wrong, but... it's, it's one of those things that's just like there.

ARTIST

I'm an artist myself, and if I were to create something I'd feel like I'd want to get paid for my work. I wouldn't want it to be given away for free. You know, so I totally understand how a musician would feel if his or her music were being stolen or basically being given away for free when they could be getting paid.

MINISTER

I try to give credit to anybody, I use slides in my sermons, and I try to be very very careful and sensitive to it, but I know there are times when I am abusing the copyrights. That google search for images, I'll tell you, it's right there.

ATHLETE

Personally, I don't, I don't, I read the books. I don't try and, uh, take someone's idea, but, that's just because of the way I was raised.

*“ANY OTHER THOUGHTS OR COMMENTS ABOUT COPYRIGHT?”
is clearly visible somewhere.*

MAILMAN

Things are shifting right now, and like media companies really don't know how to handle it, and so they're just trying to cling it down like "oh you can't fileshare! You can't do that!" When really I think what's going to end up happening is how people make money off music is going to be really different in another ten years, you know, and it won't be the CD for eighteen dollars.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Um, I think that copyright, I think that it's really important, just for things like books and manuscripts and stuff. People like that don't make a lot of money traditionally. Or there's a lot of people who, um, try to be writers or musicians or whatever and don't make a lot of money, and they actually do make something original. They should get credit for it.

MINISTER

I, I think it's fairly meaningless to a lot of people. And I think I think it's there for a good reason, now, I guess the question is does it need to be relooked at it, in the basis of the time and the technology that we have. And, do we need to be better educated, or do the laws need to be changed?

The Professor

PROFESSOR stands before classroom, giving a lecture.

PROFESSOR

So how many of you, my honorable students, violated copyright law today? I see a couple of hands lurking back in the shadows. Don't worry. I'm not working for the industry. I'm not going to "name names." I see more hands now. Good. Now, what would you say if I did this?

PROFESSOR raises hand.

PROFESSOR

Okay. Even more of you are raising your hands now. Good. Now, what would you say if I told you that every single one of you broke copyright law today? What if I told you that, by the letter of the law, every single one of you is a criminal? And even worse, what if I'm telling the truth? How many of you subscribe to an RSS feed? Watch news online? Read the newspaper or articles online? Look at pictures of your favorite bands? Maybe even read something that someone sent as a forward in an e-mail with cute kittens doing something with a piece of yarn? If you answered yes to any of those or you would have answered yes to anything like any of those, then you have quite normally and unknowingly violated copyright law already today, because the "copy right" is the right to make copies, and that's how the internet works. That's what computers do.

Someone's phone "dings" with the sound of receiving information.

PROFESSOR

That smart phone in your pocket connected to twitter is making a copy of every message and putting it on your phone to display it to your eyes. So, one last time: how many of you have violated copyright law just today? Good. Now, don't you think a law that makes everyone a criminal needs to be changed? How might we go about doing that?

The Representative

REPRESENTATIVE speaks to peers animatedly. Two huge pockets on either side of the body.

REPRESENTATIVE

I want to tell you a story about how lawmaking works. We've got all a bill in front of us, coming up for a vote, and we're all going to have to decide which way to vote. We privileged few are expected to know a lot about everything. We vote on health care, taxation, education, and a whole range of other issues – each with their own peculiarities and special considerations – and our job is to understand the issues as best we can in order to represent the people. And it is here that I get to my main point: technology. Technology has given us the tools to interact with the constituents we represent in new and exciting ways.

REPRESENTATIVE takes smart phone out of pocket.

REPRESENTATIVE

This tiny little device, more powerful computationally than anything used to send Americans to the moon, also connects us with our citizens in powerful ways. Ordinary citizens, whose opinions we must value in order to carry out our duties faithfully. For instance, on Twitter I just heard from Maggie Mulva...

LOBBY enters stage, drops a huge brick of cash into REPRESENTATIVE's pocket, whispers into REPRESENTATIVE's ear, hands them a one page flyer, and leaves.

REPRESENTATIVE

And this new technology is *dangerous* to democracy!

REPRESENTATIVE sets smartphone down on floor, removes giant, clown-like hammer from somewhere, and smashes smartphone to bits.

REPRESENTATIVE

Democracy cannot thrive with technology that threatens...

REPRESENTATIVE checks one page flyer.

REPRESENTATIVE

...the very core of our presently successful business practices. Piracy runs amok, destroying all that Americans hold dear. Our very ability to export intellectual property abroad is threatened. This is why I am introducing the...

REPRESENTATIVE checks one page flyer again.

REPRESENTATIVE

(Insert whatever bill threatens internet innovation this month) onto the floor at this time. This bill will remove key pieces of the burdensome legal process that normally stand in the way of prosecuting those Americans hellbent on destroying the American economy. The portions of the legal process that the lobby...

REPRESENTATIVE coughs, loudly.

REPRESENTATIVE

...That I, excuse me, I propose removing from the legal process: Proof, the concept of being innocent until proven guilty, and any judicial oversight. In addition, I propose that we de-fund other programs – education should clearly be on the table – in order to pay for this governmental protection of businesses threatened by the onslaught of technological innovation...

LOBBY enters and coughs loudly. REPRESENTATIVE rechecks his one page flyer.

REPRESENTATIVE

...excuse me again, not technological innovation, but *technological terrorism* in recent years. If the government doesn't step up to protect these industries from their own customers, from our own constituents, from single mothers, the elderly, and any child with a laptop, we'll be spitting on the American flag. I don't think any of us here are interested in spitting on the American flag.

PROFESSOR, TECHNOLOGY, and PUBLIC enter from other side of the stage. PUBLIC places a single bill into REPRESENTATIVE's pocket. PROFESSOR offers a book length printout of research on the subject at

hand. REPRESENTATIVE doesn't acknowledge this and PROFESSOR places it on the ground, at REPRESENTATIVE's feet. TECHNOLOGY hands REPRESENTATIVE a new smart phone. All wait, staring at REPRESENTATIVE.

REPRESENTATIVE

It appears that there are...

LOBBY whistles, snaps fingers, and points to REPRESENTATIVE's pocket containing the larger sum of money.

REPRESENTATIVE

That there are other voices in the debate...

REPRESENTATIVE's new smart phone begins to make a "dinging" sound as new e-mails, tweets, etc. arrive on the smart phone.

REPRESENTATIVE

...But, uh, having, uh...

LOBBY re-enters stage and places another large sum, larger than the first, into REPRESENTATIVE's pocket. LOBBY smiles at PROFESSOR, PUBLIC, and TECHNOLOGY before leaving.

REPRESENTATIVE

Having...

REPRESENTATIVE looks at PROFESSOR, TECHNOLOGY, and PUBLIC, then REPRESENTATIVE looks at the pockets. For a final time, REPRESENTATIVE looks at PROFESSOR, TECHNOLOGY, and PUBLIC: REPRESENTATIVE shrugs shoulders. Smart phone continues dinging.

REPRESENTATIVE

We, the representatives of *the People*, must always listen to our constituents in order to serve them well and be reelected for our actions on their behalf. On behalf of the people I bring this bill to the floor, and I ask you to consider all the issues fully...

REPRESENTATIVE picks up PROFESSORS huge pile of papers. Smart phone is still dinging.

REPRESENTATIVE

...as I have, and vote for this bill.

Smart phone is dinging wildly now. REPRESENTATIVE tries to speak louder than the smart phone.

REPRESENTATIVE

Technology is dangerous!

REPRESENTATIVE smashes the new smartphone to silence.

REPRESENTATIVE

Without governmental regulation of, by, and for *the People*.

end of play

The Progress of Confusion 1.1

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

RETIRED

An retired citizen.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Student enrolled in a college.

MINISTER

A minister.

ARTIST

An artist.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

A construction worker.

PROFESSOR

A professor.

Sources

THE FIRST SECTION, "THE PUBLIC," INSPIRED BY THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS:

http://www.archive.org/details/QuestionCopyright.org_interviews_Chicago_2006

THE SECOND SECTION, "THE PROFESSOR," USES SEVERAL QUOTES FROM LAWRENCE LESSIG'S BOOK REMIX:

<http://www.archive.org/details/LawrenceLessigRemix>

The Public

Montage with lights. The public responding to questions. "WHAT IS COPYRIGHT?" is visible.

RETIRED

I have no idea.

COLLEGE STUDENT

That's why my school censors the web. Even the legal stuff.

MINISTER

Something that protects a, uh, original idea.

ARTIST

It's supposed to protect the artist.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Copyright prevents me from recording pay-per view with my DVR.

"WHAT IS COPYRIGHT PROTECTION FROM?" is visible.

ARTIST

Other artists selling my work as their own.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

It had better be protection from me: I love my boxing shows.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Lawsuits? No, that can't be right. Um...

MINISTER

Someone stealing your original idea.

Focus to RETIRED. Pause. RETIRED shrugs shoulders. "HOW LONG HAS COPYRIGHT EXISTED? WHAT IS ITS HISTORY?" is visible.

COLLEGE STUDENT

I don't know, nineteen hundred?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Um, the thirties maybe?

ARTIST

Hmm. I don't know.

MINISTER

I have no idea.

RETIRED

Well how many more questions are there then!

"DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO SWAPS COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS OVER THE INTERNET?" is visible.

MINISTER

Oh, sure. Yeah.

RETIRED

You mean that *Rapster* thing I saw in the paper?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Psh! No comment.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Are you kidding? Of course! Everyone! Absolutely everyone! There isn't a single person...

ARTIST

I, uh... no. I don't know anyone who, uh...

COLLEGE STUDENT

...my mother, my father, my uncle Joe, his girlfriend Mindy...

ARTIST

...does any of that illegal stuff...

COLLEGE STUDENT

...half of my professors, Angie the bartender down at the...

ARTIST

...I'd tell you if I did, but, uh, I really don't know anyone who...

COLLEGE STUDENT

...his three year old kid, old man Jasper, the "dog lady" ...

"HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS FILESHARING?" is visible.

RETIRED

My grandkids send their pictures and nice cards on the email.

MINISTER

I use pictures in my sermons and I try my best to give credit but that image search: it's all right there.

COLLEGE STUDENT

So we just leared about the Library of Alexander, I think, and, uh, his library sucks compared to the internet. You get me?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

I'm not saying another word.

ARTIST

Mixed feelings. I'd be upset if someone stole my stuff and made money, but has copyright ever helped me? No. I sorta wish people would pirate my stuff.

*"ANY OTHER THOUGHTS OR COMMENTS ABOUT COPYRIGHT?"
is visible. Focus to CONSTRUCTION WORKER who cracks knuckles and
nods head "No."*

RETIRED

Bye bye, now.

COLLEGE STUDENT

It's important for those artists, I guess, who don't make much money. But for everyone else it's just a pain in the...

ARTIST

Wanna commission an original song?

MINISTER

Most people ignore it, clearly. I understand the concept of it, I guess, but do we need to re-look at it, with all the technology now? Do we need to be better educated or do the laws need to change?

The Professor

As near an imperceptible transition as possible.

PROFESSOR

The laws need to change. Digital technologies make it feasible—for the first time in history—to do what Jefferson dreamed of when he founded the Library of Congress: “to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.” The costs of digitizing and making accessible every bit of our past are increasingly trivial. At least, the technical costs are trivial. The legal costs, on the other hand, are increasingly prohibitive.

But forget about simply archiving a collection of knowledge and creativity, what about *creating* and *sharing* knowledge and creativity of your own? Now, if copyright were a regulation limited to large film studios and record companies, then its complexity and inefficiency would be unfortunate but not terribly significant. So what if Fox has to hire more lawyers to work through complex copyright licensing problems? But when copyright law purports to regulate everyone with a computer—from kids accessing the Internet to grandmothers who allow their kids to access the Internet—then there is a special obligation to make sure this regulation is clear. And we know, from our studies, that it is anything but clear.

So we have a problem on our hands as a society and as a culture. If copyright regulates copies, and copying is as common as breathing, then a law that triggers federal regulation on copying is a law that regulates too far. If the law is going to regulate your kid, it must do so in a way your kid can understand.

The main function of copyright law is to protect the commercial life of creativity. In the vast majority of cases, that commercial life is over after a very short time. There is no good copyright reason for the law to interfere with archives or universities that seek to digitize and make available our creative past. And yet the law does. There is no good reason for anyone with access to a computer to be a criminal. And yet we all are.

The Representative

The Representative casually walks up to the podium wearing pants with huge pockets on both sides and a clown-sized – not clown colored – mallot.

REPRESENTATIVE

Our job, as representatives, is to understand the issues as best we can in order to represent the people we serve. Today we are to vote on a new measure, an important measure, the WTF-PRI Act – The World Talent Freedom, Protection Requires Insanity Act. Technology has given us the tools to interact with the constituents we represent in new and exciting ways. When this act made its way to my desk I didn't know what to think of it. "WTF ACT?" After reading it through the whole way, top to bottom, without stopping, I had some concerns. I'm sure I'm not alone. Like most of you, I was looking for answers.

REPRESENTATIVE shakes pant pocket. Waits a second, then continues.

REPRESENTATIVE

Many of my constituents, it turns out, had great concerns with this bill.

REPRESENTATIVE shakes pant pocket again, more aggressively, before continuing.

REPRESENTATIVE

And not only my constituents, but also prominent leaders and innovative technology leaders personally wrote an open letter to all of us sitting here today.

REPRESENTATIVE looks offstage. Waits, then continues.

REPRESENTATIVE

Not to mention...

Sound of “dinging” on REPRESENTATIVE’s smart phone, which he checks.

REPRESENTATIVE

New tweet! Not to mention this single mother of five, who also works as a foster parent in addition to her three minimum wage jobs and volunteer work for the...

A loud cough is heard offstage. LOBBY enters with a brick of money and places it firmly into REPRESENTATIVE’s pocket, whispers in REPRESENTATIVE’s ear, and finally hands REPRESENTATIVE a one-page flyer before exiting.

REPRESENTATIVE

And while all of those concerns were considered with the utmost respect and care, I took it upon myself to learn as much about the issues as possible.

REPRESENTATIVE reads off of one-page flyer.

REPRESENTATIVE

I would like to support the WTF-PRI Act and suggest, strongly, that we add language removing unnecessary red tape in order to allow businesses to more easily prosecute those...

Shift focus to the members of the PUBLIC section, as well as the PROFESSOR while representative continues speaking.

REPRESENTATIVE

...who threaten the very economy by stealing and copying the intellectual property of the rightful copyright owners: the big businesses. These pirates are destroying America. We need to remove concepts like “proof,” “Innocent until proven guilty,” and any form of “judicial oversight,” or “human rights” that stand in the way of a swift and warrant-less prosecution.

PROFESSOR and the characters from the Public section move towards REPRESENTATIVE. A member of the Public places a single bill into REPRESENTATIVE's pocket. PROFESSOR offers a large body of research which is ignored by the REPRESENTATIVE. PROFESSOR leaves it at REPRESENTATIVE's feet. All members of the Public take out their smart phones and begin texting. REPRESENTATIVE's smart phone is now “dinging” like crazy, drowning out almost all sound. REPRESENTATIVE begins shaking pant pocket again.

REPRESENTATIVE

But opposition grows, and I must take into account the constituents I serve. Their voices must rise above the rest to inform my opinion. They, solely, are the voice I must represent in this position...

A loud whistle is heard offstage. LOBBY briskly enters with another brick of money and places it into REPRESENTATIVE's pocket. REPRESENTATIVE tries to speak over the sound of the “dinging” from the Public, but cannot. REPRESENTATIVE places the smart phone on the ground and smashes it with the large mallet.

REPRESENTATIVE

Technology is dangerous...

All of the phones previously in the hands of the Public fall to the ground in pieces.

REPRESENTATIVE

...without Governmental regulation of, by, and for *the People*.

END OF PLAY

The Progress of Confusion 1.2

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Dramatis Personae

COLLEGE STUDENT

Student enrolled in a college.

PROFESSOR

A professor.

REPRESENTATIVE

A representative.

ARTIST

An artist.

POLICE 1

An officer of the law.

POLICE 2

An officer of the law.

Sources

[HTTP://WWW.ARCHIVE.ORG/DETAILS/QUESTIONCOPYRIGHT.ORG_INTERVIEWS_CHICAGO_2006](http://www.archive.org/details/QUESTIONCOPYRIGHT.ORG_INTERVIEWS_CHICAGO_2006)

[HTTP://WWW.ARCHIVE.ORG/DETAILS/LAWRENCELESSIGREMIX](http://www.archive.org/details/LAWRENCELESSIGREMIX)

[HTTP://WWW.GUTENBERG.ORG/CACHE/EPUB/1041/PG1041.HTML](http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1041/pg1041.html)

PART 1: THE EYES CAN COPY

Empty stage, save a small pile of burnt books and remnants of paper. The smell of smoke. Twilight. COLLEGE STUDENT is revealed with light, trying to read a broken book. Gives up and places it carefully on the ground.

COLLEGE STUDENT

...leaving, leaving, leaving.
Everything is leaving.
Everything is always like it is leaving.
Like it never was.

PROFESSOR

And art made tongue-tied by authority.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Like it never was.
And I'll never learn.
How does that work?
Who benefits now?

PROFESSOR

I found another,
nearly complete.

PROFESSOR hands student a book. It does not look "new" by any means.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Ash obscures the title
Ah, *King Lear*

PROFESSOR

A steady downfall.

We hear a thunderclap, a flash of lightening, followed by the sound of rain. PROFESSOR runs towards one stack of books.

PROFESSOR

Can these be salvaged?

COLLEGE STUDENT

Yes. The others are completely lost.

PROFESSOR

I'll put them here for now. Then we'll move them under the tree.

COLLEGE STUDENT looks at the book's cover.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Our sympathies rest with the King?
Or might we place our hearts
firmly with the peasants?

PROFESSOR

Perhaps it's a comedy then,
these things change with time.

COLLEGE STUDENT

I like the books of pictures.

PROFESSOR

Why don't you open it?

COLLEGE STUDENT opens the book. Bright light illuminates from the book. COLLEGE STUDENT shuts the book, jumps up, and begins whispering wildly.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Where did you get this!
Do you know how much trouble you'll be in!
Are you trying to get us killed?

PROFESSOR

I though you'd be happy.
It's full of texts and pictures
from before.

COLLEGE STUDENT

How could I be happy?
You've put is in danger.

PROFESSOR

You saw it, right?
Did you see it?

A firework in the sky. Loud bang. Temporary light. COLLEGE STUDENT falls to the ground, afraid.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Oh, shit! They're coming.
What did I tell you?

COLLEGE STUDENT begins to run away, book in hand.

PROFESSOR

But you saw it right?
You saw it right?
Hey! You saw it, right?

POLICE officers run on the stage. One tackles COLLEGE STUDENT, knocking the book to the floor in the process. COLLEGE STUDENT is dragged off-stage, the phone is smashed, the book torn in half, and the PROFESSOR, still asking "You saw it, didn't you?" is about to be bashed in the back of the head when: Blackout. The sound of being underwater for at least eight seconds. Lights rise in bright white light. A large man steps through a cloud of smoke puffing an enormous cigar and talking on the phone. When the smoke dissipates, a modest library of books is revealed in the background creating a rainbow of colorful spines.

REPRESENTATIVE

That's the way things had to work, preacher. Look, I'm as sorry as the next guy that you'll have to independently fund the carving of your Christ-figure hanging on the cross. You should've ditched the iconography when we rid ourselves of that horrifying public domain and made any and all reproductions a crime against progress – I mean business.

REPRESENTATIVE looks out, over the audience, as if looking down upon the world through a window before throwing his cigar across the room.

REPRESENTATIVE

Freedom of religion has nothing to do with it! You stingy religions just want to benefit from the work of the great corporate and private sponsors across the ages without paying. Fly to Italy and pay the admission fee if you want to see the Sistine Chapel. It had to be forcibly reclaimed by the governments of the world from the Vatican in order to protect art. I don't get why you don't get this. Licensing the Bible was a necessary step towards protecting it from dessication. And don't make me tell you what we're gonna do to you if we catch those "monkeys" of yours getting cute again and writing it out by hand. The fines are steep, as you know, and we don't accept your criticism of our methods. I talk to you personally as a courtesy, but that courtesy will quickly end unless you cut it out. Don't make me bring you in here again, or have you forgotten?

REPRESENTATIVE coughs loudly and moves the phone to his chest before walking out and gazing out the window over the audience once more. The sound of loud fireworks popping. Light hits the REPRESENTATIVE's face intermittently. As we fade to black on REPRESENTATIVE's silent admiration of the fireworks and oppression they represent, the sound of a low humming and distant screaming get louder.

PART 2: THE EARS CAN COPY

Single light from a prison window. COLLEGE STUDENT sits on the floor. Across the room is ARTIST, scrawling pictures on the wall with anything at all. Fireworks pop outside the window. Faint screaming,

rustling of feet, stomping of boots, burning of books is heard in the distance.

COLLEGE STUDENT

What are you drawing.

ARTIST

Pictures – pictures from before – pictures
They took them
They took them away
Like magic
But bad magic
I work to bring them back.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Where did you see them.

ARTIST shoots COLLEGE STUDENT a sharp look.

ARTIST

Don't talk like that
Don't say things things
Not here
They'll hear you
They're always listening
They're always making copies of our voices.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Had you drawn over here as well? I think I see some markings underneath the...

ARTIST

Everyday
They wash the pictures down the drain
Impermanent
I draw to remember them.
Don't know if they exist anywhere else.
You might remember these though.
Hard to stop copies in the mind.

COLLEGE STUDENT

How long have...

ARTIST

Several years
I think
Tried to keep track
All down the drain
Did you know that time is relative?

COLLEGE STUDENT looks towards the audience.

COLLEGE STUDENT

What's the deal with her?

ARTIST

Gave up
Stopped
Nothing left
You...

ARTIST nods, heavily indicating the drawings.

COLLEGE STUDENT

You learned them from...

ARTIST

Shh!
The copies
the copies of voices
never good to give them proof
they work without it well enough.

COLLEGE STUDENT reaches for a drawing utensil. ARTIST nods approval. COLLEGE STUDENT begins to draw.

ARTIST

Where'd you see it?

COLLEGE STUDENT

I thought we weren't supposed to talk about that.

ARTIST

Curiosity, you know?

COLLEGE STUDENT does a very rough, almost stick figure like drawing, of The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci.

COLLEGE STUDENT

There. That's sort of it, anyway.

ARTIST

Thanks so much for sharing it with me.

More fireworks are heard flashing outside.

COLLEGE STUDENT

More raids?

ARTIST

Humans are prone to copying
I heard Aristotle said something like that once
A long time ago.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Who's Aristotle?

ARTIST

I guess he wrote books.
He must have been a smart one.

More fireworks crackle as they look out the window. The sound grows louder as the lights fade. Eventually, the booms morph into the sound of being underwater. Then screaming underwater. Then: Blue light. PROFESSOR stands center stage, alone, thrashing in slow motion wildly. The underwater sounds and screaming come to a complete stop. I single rounded tone, high, is the only sound other than silence. Professor keeps moving slowly, eyes closed, in slow motion. Voiceover:

PROFESSOR'S VOICE

I kept asking if he'd seen it. I kept asking, shouting, if he'd seen it. I wanted to know. I needed to know. Had he seen it? Had he actually seen it? The image? Perhaps we take for granted the amazing abilities we have at any given time. Taking them for granted means that we don't fight for them. I'm here to tell you: you need to fight for them. Take it from me. It's important now.

Bright white lights. Sound of splashing water. PROFESSOR is yanked violently backwards by two large men wearing black and quickly pressed forward again to the sound of a splash. Blue light.

PROFESSOR'S VOICE

I know I took things for granted. I took the greatest library on earth for granted. I took it for granted every day. I didn't donate to these amazing worldwide projects being offered for free. I didn't even think about it. I clicked, I learned, and I was better for it – the world was better for it. I was like everyone else. All my work using and no work understanding. Things happened slowly at first. The physical libraries started to close – who needed them when we had the web – then the digital content was “licensed” instead of being bought, and someone else controlled it. At first it seemed like a dream.

Bright white lights. Sound of splashing water. PROFESSOR is again yanked violently backwards by two large men wearing black and quickly pressed forward again to the sound of a splash. Blue light.

PROFESSOR'S VOICE

Then they started erasing history. Shakespeare, for one, lost his bawdiness. Then they started erasing the present: entire websites were censored. Laws were changed. Innovation was stalled and then completely stopped. The thing I took for granted – I believed, wrongly, that they'd let everyone in. They'd let the world share. That

knowledge would be accessible to all. That they couldn't stop this natural progress toward a better tomorrow...

Sound of a gunshot. Bright red lights. PROFESSOR's eyes open wide. Splashing water. PROFESSOR stops moving slowly and starts to lower arms. Red begins turning slowly to Blue – purple, royal.

PROFESSOR'S VOICE

...but they did. Too many of us took it for granted.

PROFESSOR floats for a moment or two more before blackout.

PART 3: WITHOUT COPY

POLICE officers having a cup of coffee in a hallway.

POLICE 1

So what'd you do last night?

POLICE 2

Barbeque.

POLICE 1

Oh yeah? Sounds great. I haven't had a barbeque in years. Where'd you get the beef? I can't afford that stuff.

POLICE 2

Bread-based.

POLICE 1

Oh.

POLICE 2

But they, uh, we used this new sauce thing.

POLICE 1

Oh, that *real beef* stuff?

POLICE 2

Yeah.

POLICE 1

It was good then?

POLICE 2

Yeah.

Long pause. Each take a couple of sips. POLICE 2 spits out his coffee and dumps it in a garage bin.

POLICE 1

Just like this “coffee,” huh?

POLICE 2

I mean I’m just dying for a steak, or something, you know?

POLICE 1

What can you do? Only one manufacturer of cows. They charge whatever they want.

POLICE 2

Yeah. Hey, I remember reading, uh, *before*, about people in India worshiping cows or something.

POLICE 1

Really?

POLICE 2

Yeah. You think they still do that? Maybe there’s cows just everywhere, roaming around, looking for a mouth to feed.

POLICE 1

No way to know.

POLICE 2

Yeah. I guess not. Stupid idea.

POLICE 1

No, not so stupid, right? Dreams is what we've got. Not so stupid at all.

POLICE 1 throws coffee in the garbage bin.

POLICE 1

Let's have a "barbeque" this weekend, huh? What do you say? I'll bring the *real* beef.

END OF PLAY

The Progress of Confusion 1.3

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

MINISTER

A minister.

COLLEGE STUDENT

A college student.

FOOL

A fool.

ARTIST

An artist.

REPRESENTATIVE

A representative of the people.

Influences I'm Aware of...

[HTTP://WWW.ARCHIVE.ORG/DETAILS/QUESTIONCOPYRIGHT.ORG_INTERVIEWS_CHICAGO_2006](http://www.archive.org/details/questioncopyright.org_interviews_chicago_2006)

[HTTP://WWW.ARCHIVE.ORG/DETAILS/LAWRENCELESSIGREMIX](http://www.archive.org/details/lawrencelessigremix)

[HTTP://WWW.GUTENBERG.ORG/EBOOKS/100](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/100)

Interviews

“WHAT IS COPYRIGHT?” is visible

MINISTER

It protects the artists, and their ideas.

COLLEGE STUDENT

It makes sure that music and books aren't used illegally. So, like, others don't plagiarize art.

FOOL

Copyright? Sloppy-wrong! I learned to properly knot my bowtie on the internet.

Water sprays out of FOOL's bowtie.

ARTIST

It gives them ownership of the idea so they can sell it. No one else can sell it. So you make money. That's what it's for.

REPRESENTATIVE

Copyright is very, very, *extremely* important. And I must stress that, *extremely* important. Thank you.

Smile. Wave.

“PROTECTION FROM WHAT?” is visible

COLLEGE STUDENT

The guy at my orientation said copyright protected artists from college students. So, like, protection from their fans, I guess. Online protection from their fans?

ARTIST

Protection from other artists stealing their work, putting their names on it, and selling it as their own. Nobody wants to have their ideas stolen.

REPRESENTATIVE

Pirates. Terrorists. Child labor and suicide bombers. These are things we should all be protected from. Thank you.

Smile. Wave.

MINISTER

Protection from stealing their ideas. So their ideas can't be stolen from them.

FOOL

I decide to throw a pie in my face.

FOOL smashes a pie into face. Through the cream:

FOOL

I did it, and now, I own it. No slip shoddy paper work to fill out. It's mine.

FOOL wipes cream off of face, licks off of finger.

FOOL

Mmmmm. That tastes, well, not that great. I'll improve on it! But there'll be fines to pay if I catch anyone else improving on my pie-face-smashing property! (*Pause.*) Maybe bananas.

*"HOW LONG HAS COPYRIGHT EXISTED? WHAT IS ITS HISTORY?"
is visible.*

FOOL

Copyright began as a way to...

FOOL censors self with pie to the face.

MINISTER

I have no idea.

COLLEGE STUDENT

I read a book once, I think, and it had a copyright. It was old, like, uh, the nineteen thirties, maybe?

FOOL

Copyright began as a way to cens...

FOOL censors self, again, with pie to the face.

ARTIST

I really couldn't say. A hundred years, maybe?

FOOL blurts out quickly:

FOOL

Seventeen Ten!

FOOL winces, expecting a pie that never comes.

REPRESENTATIVE

Forever, as nature intended. Thank you.

Smile. Wave.

FOOL

It began as a form of...

FOOL takes another pie to the face. Begrudgingly wipes off cream covering mouth:

FOOL

...censorship.

Pause. FOOL takes another pie to the face. "DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO SWAPS COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS OVER THE INTERNET?" is visible.

REPRESENTATIVE

I wouldn't associate with such low-life, reprehensible criminals. Thank you.

Smile. Wave.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Absolutely everyone.

ARTIST

No, I don't know anyone who –

FOOL laughs wildly.

COLLEGE STUDENT

All of my friends, my little sister, all of her friends –

ARTIST

Honestly, I'd tell you if I did, but I –

FOOL laughs wildly.

COLLEGE STUDENT

– the “can man” by Walmart, the “dog lady” on the corner of third street –

ARTIST

– I really don't know anyone who does that –

FOOL continues laughing.

COLLEGE STUDENT

– the hot librarian, the creepy librarian, the –

ARTIST

No one I know does that illegal stuff.

FOOL, still laughing heartily, smashes a pie into the artists face.

FOOL

The artist doesn't know anybody. Ha!

The Big Jest

REPRESENTATIVE sits on a kingly thrown. FOOL sits in a far-too-small kindergarten chair with attached desk.

REPRESENTATIVE

I have heard.

FOOL

Of course you have.

REPRESENTATIVE

What!?

FOOL

You have heard. Yes. Go on.

REPRESENTATIVE

I have heard... troubling things indeed... about this copying.

FOOL

Troubling things!

REPRESENTATIVE

What!?

FOOL

You have heard troubling things.

REPRESENTATIVE

Yes. Troubling things... about this copying.

FOOL

Copying!

REPRESENTATIVE

What!?

FOOL

The highest form of flattery.

REPRESENTATIVE

Yes. The highest form of larceny! Something must be done!

FOOL

Well, I find it all quite fun.

REPRESENTATIVE

The gallows! To keep others safe from harm!

FOOL

Just cut off all of their copied arms!

REPRESENTATIVE

What!?

FOOL

Forget about wringing their little necks. To stretch them out would make them unique. Rather remove their copied arms, to keep your uniqueness safe from harm!

REPRESENTATIVE

Arms! How true! They stole my birthright! My uniqueness! My God-given light! Bring them in!

FOOL

Bring them in!

REPRESENTATIVE

What!?

ARTIST, COLLEGE STUDENT, and MINISTER enter as peasants.

FOOL

Why look at that! They all stand the same! "Hello my..." Whoa! One even copied your name!

REPRESENTATIVE

You are named JOHN!

MINISTER

I am.

REPRESENTATIVE

Well give it back! You copied my name! I'll have none of that!

MINISTER

But it's my name. How can I dispossess myself of it?

FOOL

I'll remove their name, dear King!

FOOL rips off their nametag and crumples it before whispering to MINISTER:

FOOL

Play along now. (*Louder:*) From here on you will be called Gertrude.

MINISTER

Gertrude!

REPRESENTATIVE

Aye! Gertrude is your name.

FOOL

Armless Gertrude!

REPRESENTATIVE

Quite right! You're all found guilty of copying my arms!

ARTIST attempts to hide arms.

ARTIST

I don't have arms.

REPRESENTATIVE

Oh. I thought I saw...

FOOL

Sure enough, Master, no arms to be found.

FOOL whispers to ARTIST:

FOOL

Well played.

REPRESENTATIVE

Then you are free! But the rest...

ARTIST flees the room quickly.

FOOL

Dear me, King, but wasn't Gertrude your grandmother's name?

REPRESENTATIVE

Grandmother... I think you're right.

MINISTER

I can be called...

FOOL

Call in the mathematician, sir! Surely we'll be able to give everyone a unique name.
I could be, oh, fifty three!

REPRESENTATIVE

I quite like my name...

FOOL

Well, you could be the only John!

COLLEGE STUDENT

I had a great-great-grandfather named John.

FOOL slaps COLLEGE STUDENT hard, then whispers:

FOOL

Do you want to keep your arms? (*Louder:*) We'll rename the deceased, Sir!

REPRESENTATIVE

Rename the deceased?

FOOL

All of them.

REPRESENTATIVE

Sounds easy enough.

FOOL

We'll need to rewrite history too! Too many John's in the past.

REPRESENTATIVE

I quite like this plan for uniqueness.

FOOL

Snowflakes all, Sir! Snowflakes all! Of course, we'll have to rename your namesake, the third King John.

REPRESENTATIVE

Well... I don't know about...

FOOL

A necessary step in ensuring that no one copies.

MINISTER

I was named John in honor of you, dear King.

FOOL

Not anymore! You'll be a number now.

REPRESENTATIVE

I was named in honor of a long line of ancestors. Is all that to be meaningless?

FOOL

The cost of originality sir, 'tis the steep steep cost.

REPRESENTATIVE

Let them all go. You may still be called John. I'm flattered. Thank your parents.

MINISTER

Thank you, Thank you, King!

COLLEGE STUDENT

Thank you, King

MINISTER and COLLEGE STUDENT leave.

REPRESENTATIVE

Copying can be good then, I think.

FOOL

I'm the product of a long line of

FOOL takes a pie in the face.

END OF PLAY

The Progress of Confusion 1.4

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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This play is part of the *Twenty-five Tens Project*
@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

BRIAN

A computer user.

EVA

A computer user.

Some Influences:

[HTTPS://WWW.EFF.ORG/](https://www.eff.org/)

[HTTP://WWW.FSF.ORG/](http://www.fsf.org/)

[HTTP://XKCD.COM/743/](http://xkcd.com/743/)

The Dillema

BRIAN sits behind a laptop.

BRIAN

Ugh! What is the problem with this stupid thing?

BRIAN hits his computer. EVA enters from offstage brushing her teeth.

EVA

What's the problem now.

BRIAN

I can't get my music back on. It says it wants to "reformat" the hard drive, or something, and that reformatting will erase all of my music. This is ridiculous.

EVA

Okay. Can I get you a drink or something to calm down.

BRIAN

Calm down? I sent it into the company. It was under warranty, and they erased all of my files.

EVA

And why did you send it into the company?

BRIAN

Because it was broken.

EVA

And why was it broken?

BRIAN

Whatever, Eva, let me break your computer and see how happy you are about it.

EVA

You lose your ebooks too?

BRIAN

No.

EVA

Okay.

EVA exits. We hear her spit, rinse, etc.

BRIAN

Oh! How could you? How did they? How *could* they?

EVA from offstage:

EVA

What's wrong now?

BRIAN

I'm going to bite somebody's fingers off, right off of their hand. This is ridiculous.

BRIAN pours himself a drink. EVA reenters.

EVA

You lost your ebooks too?

BRIAN

Yep.

EVA

They didn't save anything, huh?

BRIAN

Nope.

EVA

So, what's the problem?

BRIAN

Dammit, Eva! You know what the problem is. I've lost everything.

EVA

And why did you lose it?

BRIAN

The company erased everything.

EVA

And why did you give it to the company?

BRIAN

Cause it was broken.

EVA

And why was it broken.

BRIAN

I dropped it! Okay. Onto the floor. I broke it. Me. I broke it. I tripped over an apple on the ground.

EVA

A macintosh?

BRIAN

Granny Smith, okay. So there! Are you happy now or something? Does it make you laugh?

EVA

A little.

BRIAN

A little. Huh. A little.

EVA

How many times have I told you about...

BRIAN

Don't talk to me about backing up. I'm not in the mood. Besides, I got all my music and my audiobooks here, anyways.

EVA

Did you put them back on?

BRIAN

That's what that reformatting thing I was telling you about was... about. Geez, it's like you're not listening.

EVA

I was brushing my teeth.

BRIAN

And you can't listen at the same time? You chew your bubblegum and walk, don't you?

EVA

Fine. I won't help.

BRIAN

Whoa! Hey. Sorry. Hold on a minute, okay? I didn't mean anything by it. Listen, all I want to do is put the stuff on this little device here, back onto this big mess of a machine here. Easy, right? There's got to be a way.

EVA

Well...

BRIAN

Well what? Come on! I got things to do.

EVA

They don't want you to.

BRIAN

Who's they? Who's they? Why don't they want me to? It's my stuff.

EVA

They're blocking your ability to do this simple, seemingly obvious thing, because they're afraid people will steal music and other files without paying.

BRIAN

But I paid for them! and people do that anyway! You see that guy on the corner with those DVD's all the time? They aren't real. People buy them like hot cakes. They buy them like hot butter on a knife.

EVA

Yeah, but that's the reason.

BRIAN

Yeah, but it's a stupid reason.

EVA

Well, whatever, cause that's the reason.

BRIAN

Really?

EVA

Yeah.

BRIAN

But I already bought it already! It's right here. I paid for it. I bought it from them even! I bought it from them! Agh! This is supposed to be easy!

EVA

Sorry, Brian.

BRIAN

So there's no way to do it then?

EVA

Nope.

BRIAN

I thought I was paying for easy! Easy! "Easy," he says, "It'll be easy. That's why you're paying so much." Easy my ass!

BRIAN starts yelling at the computer.

BRIAN

I'M GONNA FIND YOUR LIES, COMPUTER. I'm gonna find them all. Hey, hey hey hey! I remembered something. There's this plug in the side, right, there's this plug in the side and I want to put them together, connect them up, not reformat it but, uh, you know, make it like one of those portable things. It's a different plug but I think I saved the cord or whatever in this box somewhere. Huh? Can I do that.

EVA

You can try it, but that program will open up and tell you to erase your drive again. I don't think it'll fit anyway. Don't they make "special" cords for that little thing?

BRIAN

I'LL FIND YOU COMPUTER! How can they LIE to ME about this being EASY? How can they do that? I'm gonna sue them.

EVA

BRIAN

You probably signed a EULA that says I'm gonna sue them for all they're worth, you can't sue them. the dirty liars!

BRIAN

Then they can't do that.

EVA

Do you really want to *buy a lawyer* to find out?

BRIAN

That's just great then. This little thing's got all my stuff on it... but I can't add anything new or take anything – agh! – this is so stupid!

EVA

Yep.

BRIAN

Who made this stuff up, huh? Who made it so this didn't work right? Ooo! I'm gonna wring their little necks!

EVA

At least your computer works again, right?

BRIAN

It turns on, yeah. What use is a computer without my stuff though? I can't listen to my music. I can't listen to my books. I can't... I don't even have any of my files – and before you even start: I don't need a lecture on backing up.

EVA

Sorry about that. Unfortunately you've got to find the time to listen *before* something like this happens. I can't really help too much once it has *already* happened.

BRIAN

I don't want to hear it. You're always, you're always going on about that crazy stuff. Just keep your crazy to yourself.

EVA

Alright. Should I grab your toothbrush?

BRIAN

I'm not done drinking, thank you.

EVA

Alright.

EVA gets up to leave.

BRIAN

Where are you going?

EVA

I'm gonna go do some reading, maybe a little work, before bed.

BRIAN

On your working laptop. Just rub it in my face! Thanks a lot.

EVA

I'm not rubbing it in your face. You asked me what I was going to do.

BRIAN

Whatever.

EVA

And I'm gonna listen to my music! HA!

BRIAN

Stop kicking me while I'm down!

EVA

Bring your broken device in here.

BRIAN

You can – you've been lying to me this whole time? You can fix it?

EVA

Just bring it in here.

BRIAN

You're cruel.

EVA

And you're hopeless. It's going to happen again, you know that don't you?

BRIAN

I don't want to hear any of your zealot stuff! None of it.

EVA

Okay. I'm *just saying*.

BRIAN

I know you are.

EVA

I love you you know.

BRIAN

I know. I...

EVA

I know you do. (*Pause.*) But you know the only reason this can be fixed is because I'm a "zealot," right?

BRIAN throws a pillow at EVA.

END OF PLAY

VAMPTRUCK

Kyle Reynolds Conway



VAMPTRUCK 2.0

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

VAMPIRE

A pale male in black with a victorian top hat.

PROMOTER

A promotor. Slicked back hair. Button down shirt.

GIRLS

Screaming fans.

Setting

FRONT SEAT OF A WHITE VAN. LARGE DISCO BALL HANGS FROM REAR VIEW MIRROR.

Influence:

SAW THESE TWO GUYS IN A VAN IN MY REAR VIEW MIRROR IN EARLY JULY.

Before the Gig

PROMOTER

This gig is gonna be great! Can you feel it? Can you feel *this*? Woo! I'm so pumped for you, man! I mean, think of it: a sea of girls screaming out your name, asking for your autograph, pressing keys to their hotel rooms into your tight leather pant pockets! You must have made the big time. I... hey man, what's wrong? Something get your tongue or something? I can't believe you don't have a smile on your face right now –

PROMOTER brakes quickly to a complete stop, jolting them both forward briefly.

PROMOTER

– don't tell you you got that weird Bavarian stomach flu I read about back at the motel a couple of months ago? Oh! Come on! This could seriously harm our chances for making it to the TOP! You got the gig! You can't be feeling down. Fiddlesticks! I mean, I heard it was going around but I never... vaccinations next year, buddy. I promise you: next year. No expense spared for my big star. No expense. I'll stick you with whatever needle I have to make sure you're ready for the stage. You're gonna have to fight through the pain! Grit your teeth a little bit, huh! Yeah! Come on, it's easy.

PROMOTER grits teeth and growls.

PROMOTER

Like that, huh? Yeah? No? Okay. Alright. Save your energy for the gig. Right – like a mantra – “the gig,” “the gig,” “the gig.” Alright. Okay.

PROMOTER starts driving again, slowly picking up speed.

PROMOTER

Phew! Had me worried there for a minute. Do you see this? I've actually got a sweat breaking out here. I'm sweating! Ha! Back to good! Back to normal! It's been months since I even had anything to worry about! Months! Gonna have to change shirts before we meet with everybody. Never let them see you sweat. Pit stains don't lie! Ha! Is that why you wear black all the time? Huh? It's a good choice. Gotta stay

out of the sun though, I bet. It'd get hot under all that dark. It attracts the light, you know. I had a discussion with the lighting designer. She said, "Black. Okay. It'll suck up all the light." Then she asked if you'd consider sequins. I just laughed and laughed. I can't imagine you doing your bit up there with sequins. I can't imagine you all sparkly emerging from the fog at the beginning, right? It'd just look –

VAMPIRE

This?

VAMPIRE indicates the disco ball hanging from the rear view mirror.

VAMPIRE

Hate.

PROMOTER

You *hate* this? Really? Next stop, buddy. I'll take it down. Never to be seen again. You're my only act now anyway. Between you and me – and I mean that – I used to represent a disco cover group. I'm not proud of it, okay. They were a big hit two counties over and they got me to where I am today, but I'll get rid of it soon. The reason I have it up is that we used to drive into the little town there and the adies, along with their dancing partners, would crowd the van when we pulled into town. I think the local cop put all of the lights on Main street to red when he knew we were coming to town. Have you ever been accosted by women with wheelchairs, walkers, and canes before? They look weak, let me tell you something, but they're not weak. I made the mistake of rolling down my window once – only once – and I took a tennis ball to the eye. No scars to show, or anything, but I couldn't see right for weeks. Some of those neon colored fibers got into my eye and, well, apparently it's a very common tennis injury that they just don't talk about.

VAMPIRE

Older people are surprisingly strong.

PROMOTER

Thank you! I'm so glad to hear someone else say that. When I was walking around the office with an eye-patch it was easier to tell them I had gotten involved in a gang fight or something. Of course I'm an honest guy, so by then everyone knew the real story – or "real" story as they put it – and I was the laughing stock of the town. You didn't hear about that, did you? No? I hope it didn't make it across county

lines. That would truly be embarrassing. Thank God we didn't have the internet back then! Some things you can never live down. Hey, let's get to know each other a little better, okay? A grandmother making me a pirate with a tennis ball is one of my most embarrassing stories. What about you?

VAMPIRE

Embarrassing story?

PROMOTER

Haven't you ever been embarrassed before?

VAMPIRE

Never.

PROMOTER

Okay. Okay! Ha! Keeping in character! Huh? That's great! That's the energy I love about you.

VAMPIRE

Stories, though...

PROMOTER

Is this a – a story about about you – no! Well – in character! You're practicing! Okay. Alright. Lay it on me. I wrote copy for a number of years for a local business. Give it a whirl. I can give you some action words, some power verbs, some tips to help clean it up.

VAMPIRE

I'm only interested in truth.

PROMOTER

Sure you are! Of course! Truth it is. Not a single word from me. I'll keep my mouth shut. See this... I'm zipping it up and locking the key and I'll put it in your hand. Ha ha! Okay, go ahead. Okay?

VAMPIRE

Dark. Night. Someone wants to cross the street. "Oh, here, let me help" says the old man with the stop sign wearing neon. I hate neon. I hate stopping. I approach the middle of the intersection quickly and –

PROMOTER

But kids don't go to school at night, right? I mean, I've never seen a crossing guard working at –

VAMPIRE

I said: I hate stopping.

PROMOTER

Right. Okay.

PROMOTER re-zips, locks, etc. mouth and hands key to VAMPIRE.

VAMPIRE

I quickly make it to the intersection of the road. Tragic. The old man with the stop sign is having a heart attack. Pacemaker quit on him. He falls at my feet. The woman he was helping across the street stands dumbstruck, her mind elsewhere, and is hit by a passing garbage truck. The glaze over her eyes remains as they peel her from the grill hours later. The man, already dead, is an afterthought. Tragic, by human terms, but less so than the woman and the garbage truck.

PROMOTER

That isn't about kids.

VAMPIRE

No.

PROMOTER

Okay. I mean, it's sort of spooky, I guess, but it isn't about, you know, *evil* or *darkness* or anything. I don't get the angle.

VAMPIRE

Truth.

PROMOTER

What if you rushed to the center of the street and stopped the old man's heart with a finger snap. Huh? Then you pushed the woman in front of the garbage truck and like, I don't know, sucked everyone's blood to stay looking young and handsome.

VAMPIRE

Truth.

PROMOTER

I don't get the angle is all. What about –

VAMPIRE

Why does it have to be *about* anything?

PROMOTER

We're going for something, uh, with a KA-BOOM! You know, something that grabs them. Something that makes them, uh, fear you. Fear your presence even. Or, you know, at the same time long to be near you. I mean, I get the vampire vibe and all, I just don't think you're using it fully. It's got potential. It's got a lot of potential.

VAMPIRE

Continue.

PROMOTER

You gotta be, I don't know, more violent.

VAMPIRE

Violent?

PROMOTER

Yeah, violent.

VAMPIRE

Violent.

The word "Violent" echoes into screaming, feet stomping and running, growling, etc.

After the Gig

*Lights up. VAMPIRE covered in blood. PROMOTER shaking silently.
Still in the van.*

VAMPIRE

Go.

PROMOTER starts the car and begins to drive.

PROMOTER

Where are we going?

VAMPIRE

Just drive.

PROMOTER

I didn't mean what I said back then, before you know, about being violent. I just meant –

VAMPIRE

Quiet.

PROMOTER

Okay.

VAMPIRE

Take the first exit and then get out of the car at the overpass.

PROMOTER

Okay. And then what are you going to do?

VAMPIRE

I'm going to be about something. I'm going to be more violent. Like you said, I'm going to be more violent.

PROMOTER

I mean the story, okay? The story. not –

VAMPIRE

I'm only interested in truth. Now I'll have a story to tell. A true story.

PROMOTER

Then just be yourself!

VAMPIRE

Slow down.

Van comes to a stop.

VAMPIRE

Get out.

PROMOTER

I'm not giving you the keys, though.

VAMPIRE

Yes you are. Of course you are.

PROMOTER

I don't know what's gotten into you, but it's not right.

VAMPIRE

You don't know when to shut your mouth, do you? Always yapping like a little dog.

PROMOTER

I guess I don't then.

PROMOTER gets out of the van.

VAMPIRE

Give me the keys.

PROMOTER

What? Are you taking the highway to hell? You missed your exit back at the gig. You could've just waited for the cops to show up. A bullet to hell is much faster.

VAMPIRE gets out of the car.

PROMOTER

What did you do to everyone in there, huh? The lights went out and then everyone was dead and you were covered in blood. Is that what you're gonna do to me? I want to know.

VAMPIRE

You have no idea what I'm going to do to you.

PROMOTER

That's why I asked.

VAMPIRE

Now give me the keys, for the last time, and I won't hurt you.

PROMOTER throws keys to VAMPIRE.

VAMPIRE

Maybe I'll just hurt you a little...

PROMOTER

I'd prefer that you didn't.

VAMPIRE makes scary face and sound. PROMOTER shrinks in fear. Suddenly, several girls emerge from the back of the van through the cabin. They are covered in blood, carrying mylar balloons, and screaming "Happy Birthday!"

VAMPIRE

Happy birthday you old fool!

PROMOTER

What?

VAMPIRE

Are you surprised?

PROMOTER

What?

GIRLS

Happy Birthday! Happy Birthday! Happy Birthday! Birthday! Happy! Happy!

VAMPIRE

My fans and I planned this for you, as a surprise! Happy birthday!

PROMOTER

Oh my God... What?

VAMPIRE

Happy birthday! Did I embrace the violence enough for you this time?

PROMOTER

You're kidding me!

VAMPIRE

Truth! Now I've got a story to tell. Shouldn't have let you live though! Come on!

VAMPIRE throws PROMOTER the keys.

VAMPIRE

We've got a party planned at the hotel. Cake and everything.

Everyone gets back in the van.

VAMPIRE

Let's listen to some of that disco music on the way! Good times!

PROMOTER

A nice person. A really nice person. Thanks!

Lights are warm. Quickly cut to red. VAMPIRE and GIRLS make horrifying faces. PROMOTER is happily smiling and singing along to the music. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

VAMPTRUCK 2.1

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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This play is part of the *Twenty-five Tens Project*
@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

TALENT

A pale male in black with a victorian top hat.

PROMOTER

A promotor. Slicked back hair. Button down shirt.

Setting

AN EMPTY, ECHOING ROOM.

THE FRONT SEAT OF A WHITE VAN.

Intro Music

The most lovely classical guitar playing brings us into the play.

Horror

At rise the lights come up quickly. Loud, horrifying sound is heard. Scratching, shrieking, etc. TALENT stands ominously upstage of PROMOTER who is cowering in fear at TALENT's feet. TALENT has arms outstretched, a horrifying expression, and is growling. Perhaps a strobe would help. This image should last only a few seconds before blackout.

The New Talent

PROMOTER and TALENT in two seats representing the front of a van. Discoball hangs from rearview mirror. PROMOTER is driving. TALENT is in the passenger seat.

PROMOTER

I just find it a little odd, is all. I mean, when I first went to one of your gigs, back in “oh-seven”, I thought: talented musician, unique style, classically trained – clearly – but, I had no idea how to market you. It took me nearly five years – half a decade – to figure it out. I mean, the market sort of figured it out for me, but do you get where I’m coming from? Does that make sense at all?

TALENT

No.

PROMOTER

Listen to me now: where did you get those clothes? I mean, did you find them in a dumpster or something? Did you have, uh, tea-time with grandma every week and convince her to sew you up something from your imagination? Were your parents bikers or into leather or something? And what's with all the piercings! Just look at you – you're so pale – did you ever go outside? Did you live in, like, England or something? Were you locked in a basement during your formative years? Were you just born this light? Are you – are you wearing makeup or something? This, this look of yours, or whatever, is weird. Very unconventional.

TALENT

Lots of people look like this.

PROMOTER

They do, huh?

TALENT

Tons of people. All you have to do is just walk down the street and you'll run into –

PROMOTER

I've got a car, thank you, I drive down the street. Anyway, that's besides the point. Even if lots of people look like this – even if you're telling the truth: and I'm not calling you a liar or anything – even if, you know what *they* don't have? Hmm? Talent. You've got talent dripping out of your ears. You've got talent coming right out of your fingertips. You've got some uncanny ability to make a piece of wood and some strings sing – absolutely sing! – but the problem is that it just doesn't add up.

TALENT

Well, it's not math.

PROMOTER

It doesn't make sense. Listen, where'd you get that hat?

TALENT

Special order from this really neat guy in Bavaria. He's about eighty and he takes custom orders for hats in his shop during the spring. It cost a fortune but –

PROMOTER

You see my point? No? You don't see my point? You're not seeing the thing that I've been indelicately trampling on top of for the last half-hour or so?

TALENT

No.

PROMOTER

You've got all of these quirks, all of this weirdness and specifications for this and for that and the other – but it doesn't make sense for your act. Or, rather, it *didn't* make any sense before. It still doesn't make sense entirely but we're gonna work on that.

TALENT

So it's alright then? I'm willing to learn. Music keeps me alive, you know. It worked itself out. We're fine, right?

PROMOTER

No! Are you listening to a single thing I've been saying? When you walk onto stage I expect you to draw a pentagram in human blood, sacrifice a goat for the power to play your mighty axe, bite heads off of bats, scream your throat raw and head bang until you head *ache*. I expect trashed hotel rooms, shocking headlines on newspapers, and freaky posterboard protests from local religious groups! What I don't expect – at all – is for you to sit down on a little wooden stool in the middle of an empty stage and pluck out enchanting, God-fearing melodies – known and new – on a modest classical guitar.

TALENT

Oh.

PROMOTER

Yeah! You get me now, huh!

TALENT

I look like a freak. One of those heavy metal guys?

PROMOTER

Death metal. Black metal. Satan worshiping rockers from hell. But there you go.

TALENT

But you said the problem was fixed?

PROMOTER

Partially fixed. It will be fully fixed soon.

TALENT

Please don't cut my hair.

PROMOTER

Cut your hair? Are you kidding? I love the hair.

TALENT

You do?

PROMOTER

Big fan of it, actually. That's the part that fixed itself. Your appearance is marketable now, save a couple minor cosmetic changes.

TALENT

I'm still playing classical guitar, right?

PROMOTER

I'm not taking away your talent, kid. I'm not gonna steal that from you – that's your golden ticket. I'm concerned with marketing your talent. And we finally got it down.

TALENT

So what are we doing then?

PROMOTER

Vampires, kid. Vampires.

TALENT

Vampires?

PROMOTER

You don't get out much do you? Have you seen the market for vampires recently?

TALENT

I don't know anything about –

PROMOTER

They're everywhere. First some terrible books – and I mean *terrible* – get really popular with the *tween* crowd. They all spent their summers earning certificates for tiny pizzas from their local libraries by reading that drivel. And then, remarkably, those terrible books get turned into God-awful films. Successful, but God-awful. They're better than the books, mind you, but they're riddled with all sorts of – You know, I gotta stop talking about this or I'll explode! Alright, then we've got a perfect storm: Fan fiction –

TALENT

What's fan fiction.

PROMOTER

Kids writing their own stories on the internet. Based on the existing story: characters and whatnot – it's a big deal to ten year old girls.

TALENT

Oh.

PROMOTER

Anyway, we get fan fiction, conventions, magazine covers etc. The undead are coming back in a big way. Presidential bibliographies about hunting vampires, weird rewrites of public domain literature involving zombies, on-demand out-of-circulation television series making comebacks on the web, and a host of other pale-people related stuff in the works all over the place. Well guess what, all of that means that you, my friend, are mainstream. You fit in.

TALENT

I fit in.

PROMOTER

You're marketable. Vampires can be sensitive now. They can feel things. They can care. Vampires are the new James Dean. Sure, you've got sharp teeth, but you might not bite – you can try to restrain yourself – you're not soulless. You're a killer, but soft-spoken –

TALENT

You don't have to yell or scream or sell your soul to satan.

PROMOTER

Right. Exactly. You can –

TALENT

Play classical guitar.

PROMOTER

You got it. One crappy book and you've got a chance. How's that for a good deal, huh? It's not just about talent, you gotta be lucky, and as luck goes, kid, you hit the jackpot. You're a weird looking guy – not that I care one way or the other – but for you to go mainstream like this is like finding the cure for cancer or something. Big deal.

TALENT

Great. Cool. Alright.

PROMOTER

I always keep a list of talented weirdos I can't do anything for at all. I carry it with me in case something happens. Well, something happened and here we are.

TALENT

So what do I need to do to, you know, play guitar for my fans?

PROMOTER

You've got two problems, kid. Two big problems. One: You're too damn nice. You're little. Does that make sense? How about this: I don't believe you could kill me. Okay. Vampires kill people, even the ones that don't, and killing people is a quality you gotta have.

TALENT

I don't want to kill anyone. I'm not a killer. I'm a guitar player.

PROMOTER

I'm not gonna ask you to kill anyone – though it wouldn't be the first time – but I am gonna ask you to start believing you could kill someone. Because, let me tell you, given the right circumstances you could kill someone in a heartbeat. Less than a heartbeat. You could kill them in a *soul beat*, or something mystical like that or something. You get me.

TALENT

Okay. I can kill someone then.

PROMOTER

That was a little weak – I don't believe you.

TALENT

I thought vampires could be sensitive now. I thought they could play classical guitar.

PROMOTER

They can! But you've still got to be internally scary. Full of secrets and a terrible past – but we'll fix that later: no worries. That gets us to our second problem: there's no otherworldliness to you. You're just a weird kid with a great talent wearing black clothes and an expensive hat. You've gotta get a sense of mystery around you or something. You look at the guys playing vampires today and you get – well, you're supposed to get – a calm sort of together type of thing.

TALENT

Like a confidence, maybe?

PROMOTER

That's it! That's it exactly. You've got to get a confidence thing going for yourself. Your chest has got to stick out a little. Everyone else is going about their business but you've seen it all play out already – you've lived so long already. You're like the old man at the nursing home with the sharp – so sharp –

TALENT

Teeth?

PROMOTER

Mind! Sharp mind asking to play chess every time you walk by.

TALENT

I don't visit nursing homes.

PROMOTER

Well start. And every time you say "no," cause you figure "what's this weird old guy gonna do for me?" and you repeat yourself, over and over, until eventually you say yes for whatever reason – he wore you down maybe – and it turns out that this guy knows a hell of a lot. He destroys you in chess, for one, but his mind is like, I don't know how to describe it, but it's like he knows exactly what you're thinking and can tell you why you're wrong. Psychologists – or is it psychiatrists? Whichever – they study for years to be able to sort of see past the bullshit of life, but these old people sitting in the homes, they do it without the schooling – they did it by living.

TALENT

I can learn how to play chess, but I don't know anything about –

PROMOTER

It's not about chess or the training or anything, it's like an awareness you don't expect them to have – though pretty much they all do – in your case it's even more surprising because you're so young. You're so now. You're so it. You're body is hot but your eyes are cold.

TALENT

Please.

PROMOTER

This isn't me, this is going to be the girls. This is the marketing I'm talking about. If you get one the other will follow. The killing or the confidence – cause you got neither at this moment – and soon enough you'll have them both. So step over here and give me your best vampire scare.

TALENT

Okay.

Same set up as introductory image. This time, however, lights and sounds are absent. Making the reality pathetic. TALENT tries to growl, but PROMOTER is not impressed.

PROMOTER

You know, you don't actually have to growl. I think, if I remember right, it's the werewolves that growl. Maybe it was something else. Just forget the growling. Vampires sort of know they're the most powerful thing in the room.

TALENT

Okay.

PROMOTER

You've got to sense it.

Lights flicker. Voiceover of TALENT character: "I could kill him."

PROMOTER

That's getting it. You don't even really have to move.

Lights flicker again. Voiceover of TALENT character: "Just exhale a little and he'd turn to dust."

PROMOTER

Very good.

Lights flicker again. Voiceover of TALENT character: "I could tear out his heart in a single breath."

PROMOTER

That's great! Yeah. Go with that. Your *inner monologue*.

Lights begin to flicker intermittently. Sounds emerge. Voiceover of TALENT character: "I see it so clearly now. So tiny and insignificant."

TALENT

Like a bug.

Voiceover of TALENT character: "A gnat. A little trickle of water with legs and a heart."

PROMOTER

Whoa! Impressing me! Seriously.

TALENT

Tisk tisk tisk.

PROMOTER

Oh yeah!

Voiceover of TALENT character: "Such a fool. Misplaced excitement."

TALENT

I'll show him.

TALENT strikes PROMOTER across the face.

PROMOTER

Whoa! Hey. A little, uh, too much into character now.

TALENT strikes PROMOTER across the face again.

PROMOTER

Ouch! Hey! Stop it now! I'm serious –

Repeat of opening image with lights and sounds. Screaming. Blackout. From the dark we hear a classical guitar. Lights slowly up revealing promoter's body lying on the ground. TALENT sits on a small wooden stool playing a classical guitar. The tune, however, is dischordant and disjointed. It fades, painfully, as we fade to black.

END OF PLAY

VAMPTRUCK 2.2

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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This play is part of the *Twenty-five Tens Project*
@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

VAMPIRE

A pale male in black with a victorian top hat.

PROMOTER

A promotor. Slicked back hair. Button down shirt.

Setting

A WHITE VAN. LARGE DISCO BALL HANGS FROM REAR VIEW MIRROR.

PROMOTER

Lifes dream?

VAMPIRE

To be immortalized like Segovia.

PROMOTER

The guitar player?

VAMPIRE

The one and only.

PROMOTER

The immortal angle can work.

VAMPIRE

An undead Andres Segovia?

PROMOTER

No. An undead you playing like Segovia.

VAMPIRE

I can live with that.

PROMOTER

You ready to make a deal?

PROMOTER offers his hand.

VAMPIRE

Thinking...

PROMOTER

You dress like this all the time?

VAMPIRE

Every day.

PROMOTER

Even in the summer?

VAMPIRE

It's my style.

PROMOTER

Doesn't wearing all that black make you hot?

VAMPIRE

I don't sweat the little stuff.

PROMOTER

So we're in business then?

VAMPIRE

I play guitar and you...

PROMOTER

I market you as the feeling vampire.

VAMPIRE

Watch me pout.

PROMOTER

Too much lip.

VAMPIRE

Better?

PROMOTER

Yes. Let's shake on it.

PROMOTER offers hand again.

VAMPIRE

Umm...

PROMOTER

Well, if we did this, first we'd connect with your niche market.

VAMPIRE

Okay. How?

PROMOTER

A little thing called the internet.

VAMPIRE

I have a music page on YouTube.

PROMOTER

That's fine, but you need to be more specific. You need to go to the dark side.

VAMPIRE

Black metal web pages?

PROMOTER

No.

VAMPIRE

Peer to peer? Torrents?

PROMOTER

No. No.

VAMPIRE

Facebook?

PROMOTER

Good candidates all, but no. Fan fiction: specifically vampire fan fiction.

VAMPIRE

I don't know what that is.

PROMOTER

Long history of fans writing stories in worlds brought to being in books.

VAMPIRE

Okay.

PROMOTER

Star Wars books about minor characters.

VAMPIRE

Written by?

PROMOTER

Losers in basements.

VAMPIRE

Stereotype?

PROMOTER

Clearly. Many successful people live in basements.

VAMPIRE

Name one.

PROMOTER

Batman.

VAMPIRE

Fictional.

PROMOTER

Indicative. At any rate: vampire fan fic pages are just the start.

VAMPIRE
Conferences?

PROMOTER
Absolutely.

VAMPIRE
Live action role playing circles?

PROMOTER
Nail-on-head.

VAMPIRE
Concerts?

PROMOTER
Special guest appearances with “fan bands.”

VAMPIRE
Fan bands?

PROMOTER
Like fan fic but with music.

VAMPIRE
Singing about the fictional world?

PROMOTER
And minor characters, films, plot points, *et cetera*.

VAMPIRE
Sounds busy.

PROMOTER
It will be.

VAMPIRE

But I'm marketable?

PROMOTER

Thanks to some terrible books, yes.

VAMPIRE

I'll have to read them.

PROMOTER

Please don't.

VAMPIRE

Afraid there'll be more.

PROMOTER

Even without your purchases, yes.

VAMPIRE

Wikipedia?

PROMOTER

Good synopses there I'm sure.

VAMPIRE

Music stays the same though, right?

PROMOTER

Yep. Your persona though...

VAMPIRE

Stage persona....

PROMOTER

We're not reprogramming you or anything.

VAMPIRE

More hair?

PROMOTER

No. Not appearance. Not too much anyway.

VAMPIRE

And not music.

PROMOTER

No, persona. The aura around you.

VAMPIRE

How do you do that?

PROMOTER

You ever fight?

VAMPIRE

Only pixels on video screens.

PROMOTER

Castlevania?

VAMPIRE

Missed that one.

PROMOTER

Wikipedia that, please.

VAMPIRE

Got it.

PROMOTER

We'll create the persona through pictures...

VAMPIRE

That's not appearance?

PROMOTER

Not the way you're thinking. Your hair is safe. Trust me.

VAMPIRE

Altering the images or something?

PROMOTER

More like showing a certain side.

VAMPIRE

Okay. Stage show?

PROMOTER

Some pre-show thing. Lights, music, maybe a facade of some sort.

VAMPIRE

Ushers in Victorian garb?

PROMOTER

That's a little much.

VAMPIRE

Music video then?

PROMOTER

Doable. Depends on the funds. We've got to build a fan base right now, and that starts with a...

PROMOTER offers hand again.

VAMPIRE

Still stewing.

PROMOTER

We'll do library shows.

VAMPIRE

A tour of libraries?

PROMOTER

You'll be billed as a fan band.

VAMPIRE

My persona is going to be a lie?

PROMOTER

Books you've never read propel you to stardom!

VAMPIRE

Books I haven't even Wikipedia'd!

PROMOTER

You'll do fine.

VAMPIRE

Only when they ask me about the music I play.

PROMOTER

You can be a little off-putting. You're a vampire after all!

VAMPIRE

They're not always nice, are they?

PROMOTER

They're getting nicer in pop culture right now.

VAMPIRE

You take the scary away and you're left with...

PROMOTER

A classical guitarist...

VAMPIRE

Pretending to like books he hasn't read...

PROMOTER

Dressed as a vampire...

VAMPIRE

Playing for tweens in a library.

PROMOTER

You got it! But do *we* have it?

PROMOTER offers hand again.

VAMPIRE

Libraries?

PROMOTER

It could be worse.

VAMPIRE

Really?

PROMOTER

Oh yeah. Much worse. You could still be in a basement somewhere.

VAMPIRE

I was happy enough.

PROMOTER

You were lying to yourself.

VAMPIRE

Fifty people watched my videos.

PROMOTER

And now fifty people will upload their own videos *of you* every night.

VAMPIRE

I'm feeling nauseous.

PROMOTER

Roll down a window.

VAMPIRE

So...

PROMOTER

Deal?

PROMOTER offers hand again.

VAMPIRE

Go on tour as a vampire fan?

PROMOTER

Across the library system.

VAMPIRE

A vast, expansive...

PROMOTER

Worth your time, believe me.

VAMPIRE

Or I could go home.

PROMOTER

But your moment is now. Let's make a deal, Vampire.

VAMPIRE

I'm beginning to think you're the bloodsucker.

PROMOTER makes an oath:

PROMOTER

Angelic as Cain and Abel.

VAMPIRE

Okay.

They shake.

VAMPIRE

Let's go to the library.

PROMOTER

Classical Vamp! This is going to be great!

PROMOTER gets on his phone. Begins making deals.

VAMPIRE

What's with the disco ball?

END OF PLAY

VAMPTRUCK 2.3

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

DARREN

A pale male in black with a victorian top hat.

VINCE

A promotor. Slicked back hair. Button down shirt.

In a forest. A large tree trunk.

VINCE

So what do you think?

DARREN

Um, That we're in the middle of a forest.

VINCE

Not just any forest.

DARREN

A *big* forest.

VINCE

These aren't just any trees.

DARREN

Because they're *big* trees.

VINCE

Bigger than you know. This tree was climbed – are you ready? – by the stars of the most recent vampire movie.

DARREN

Wow.

VINCE

You betcha, wow! Come here and touch it. Put your hand on this historic trunk. Amazing, isn't it?

DARREN

There are... no words.

VINCE

I've never been so close to something so big before. What's wrong?

DARREN

Feeling a little removed is all.

VINCE

Well come closer. Touch it again. Some fans flock here – they say the tree has healing power.

DARREN

No thanks. I'm fine right where I am.

VINCE

I think there are some things
that are close and distant at the same time:
Paradise for example.
The relations between a man and a woman.
The course a boat takes across the water ¹.

DARREN

Yeah. Okay. I'm close and distant to the tree, I guess. I, uh, feel it more over here.

VINCE

That's great! Now, what if I told you that this is the spot!

DARREN

For the music video?

VINCE

You betcha. The best music video ever. Gonna launch your career to new heights!

DARREN

Does it have to be under the vampire tree?

VINCE

Your fan base loves those movies.

¹From *Orestes 2.0* by Charles Mee

DARREN

My sister calls the main character the sparkle fairy.

VINCE

Not your fan base, clearly.

DARREN

Pre-teen girls with expendable cash?

VINCE

...who love the vampire movies.

DARREN

Well, how is anyone going to even know it's the same tree anyway?

VINCE

Bonus features.

DARREN

For a three minute song?

VINCE

All the rage now.

DARREN

Really.

VINCE

Dissemination is cheaper now.

DARREN

Okay. Sure. That part makes sense.

VINCE

...and...

DARREN

What?

VINCE

You're not a fan of the series, are you? Not into vampires? Werewolves? Romantic triangles?

DARREN

Well...

VINCE

You're going to be dressed as a vampire.

DARREN

No way.

VINCE

Yeah way.

DARREN

Come on, Vince. This'll be on video – recorded forever.

VINCE

I hear what you're saying to me, but I just feel like you're too young to have a helpful philosophy in place yet.

DARREN

What?

VINCE

This tree has an aura, and not because of the film. It is an ancient aura. A centering of souls. A magnetism against being thrown off of the planet. A core.

DARREN

It's a tree.

VINCE

But what does it do to your soul?

DARREN

I don't know, Vince. It makes my soul want to *not* dress up like a vampire!

VINCE

Too young. Life's philosophy hasn't taken hold yet. It's unfortunate.

DARREN

What's unfortunate is that I'm sitting in the middle of a forest worshipping a tree and learning I'm going to play dress up like a vampire when I should be eating!

VINCE

Well, you've only got so many breakfasts left. You're running out of money fast. Music videos like this cost money and take lots of hired help to get off of the ground.

DARREN

You already agreed to it?

VINCE

Agree? It was my idea!

DARREN

That was my money to spend!

VINCE

Half-true. Money to be spent on promoting you.

DARREN

Well I don't think *vampire guy* is promotion.

VINCE

Well, you're also not the marketing department.

DARREN

I don't want to do it.

VINCE

Your contract says otherwise.

DARREN

I still don't want to do it.

VINCE

Hair and makeup to your left.

DARREN

I haven't even eaten!

VINCE

These wonderful little sausages are arriving ever so shortly by truck.

DARREN

I'm a vegan!

VINCE

A vegan vampire. That sort of fits. We can use that.

DARREN

I hate you.

VINCE

Hate me if it fails.

DARREN

I'll hate you now.

VINCE

Love me if I'm right.

DARREN

Not holding my breath

VINCE

Do vampires breathe?

DARREN leaves stage. Gets wet hair, trenchcoat and paled face during next line. To tree trunk:

VINCE

You're the star of this piece. You are my center when I spin away ². I think I'm having a moment. There. Are we ready to do this?

DARREN walks on stage near the tree.

DARREN

Great.

VINCE

You look marvelous! Why so depressed – Oh! Feeling the brooding nature of your character – Modern vampires have emotions. We need you to be running from other vampires. You need to look scared.

DARREN sort of tries. Walks a bit. Shrugs shoulders.

VINCE

That isn't really "scared," that's closer to "bored." Go to the other side of the tree, okay. Now peek around, look both directions and start running.

DARREN

I'm tired.

VINCE

Well get un-tired.

²Lyric from *Videotape* by Radiohead

DARREN

I'm gonna breakout. What is this makeup anyway?

VINCE

As a general rule: never ask. Come on! Let's do this.

DARREN

This is a huge joke, right? Get me dressed up in this outfit, bring a bunch of cameras, make me feel the aura of a tree.

VINCE

No. Come over here. I'm gonna do the bit so you can see it. You guys get ready to film.

VINCE goes through motions as they are described.

VINCE

I'm hiding behind the tree.
I peak out – not safe.
I take a look left
then a look right
nothing. I start to move – slowly.
But I hear a broken tree branch or something behind me.
I turn around to look:
Evil Vampires!
I sprint off through the woods!

VINCE returns, panting. DARREN claps.

DARREN

That's so lame, Vince.

VINCE

Can you roll it back, slow mo, with the music over the top?

*Lights fade. Music plays. VINCE re-performs movements in slow motion.
It is awesome. Lights fade again before returning to normal.*

DARREN

Whoa! You look great.

VINCE

And I'm not even wearing makeup. Get in there!

DARREN

Yeah!

Lights fade. DARREN doing same movements in slow motion with music and voiceover on top.

DARREN

Voiceover: From the minute I heard the concept I was excited. I love the vampire films, so does everyone I know, so doing a video based on what I love was great. A real treat. Oh, and this bit here – that's the actual tree from the Vampire series. Can you believe it? The actual tree. It had an aura about it, honestly. A real experience. Okay here, I just heard one of the evil vampires. Time to run – and there I go.

DARREN exits, running in slow motion. Fade out.

END OF PLAY

VAMPTRUCK 2.4

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

DARREN

A pale male in black with a victorian top hat.

VINCE

A promotor. Slicked back hair. Button down shirt.

VINCE

Get into the car. I need to have a very serious speasy with you.

DARREN

What's a... Did I do something... I'm –

VINCE

Get into the car.

They start driving. Silence

DARREN

That's a very nice ornament. I wish, you know, I had something –

VINCE

Did you think that I wouldn't find out?

DARREN

The – I hoped – It'll, not ever, happen – candy bar was stuck in the vending machine. I guess the hotel manager called you and –

VINCE

Do you really think I'm talking about a vending machine?

DARREN

No. Sorry. Well, no, I did, actually , I –

VINCE

I don't waste my time with the theft of candy. Do you think I drove all the way down here, personally, to scold you for knocking a chocolate bar out of a vending machine?

DARREN

Bag of Animal Crackers, actually –

VINCE

Shut up. You're in it – deep – and this little speasy we're having is to remind you about our deal.

DARREN

The contract?

VINCE

I've seen what happens when musicians wear leather pants, like you do, for too long. They're the blue jeans of the music business, but they do something to a performer's head. Make them do stupid things. Things like...

DARREN

I don't know.

VINCE hits DARREN.

VINCE

Like...

DARREN

Break animal crackers?

VINCE hits DARREN again.

VINCE

You know, Bob Dylan acted up once. Do you want to end up like him?

DARREN

A superstar?

VINCE

A guy who can't form a complete syllable. You performed on another album. On another label. With some guy named Nomad.

DARREN

He had this great song and wanted me to do a verse or two with him.

VINCE

Let me remind you –

DARREN

I don't see what the big deal –

VINCE hits DARREN.

VINCE

Don't ever interrupt me!

DARREN

I just –

VINCE hits DARREN again.

VINCE

Stop interrupting me! You don't appear on anything without talking to me first. You need to remember who created you.

DARREN

My mother –

VINCE

Your mother nothing.

DARREN

She's the one –

VINCE hits DARREN.

VINCE

Do you want to get *the Dylan*? Is that what you want? You appear courtesy of me, got it?

DARREN

What was I supposed to say?

VINCE

No. Less letters than yes. Perhaps you'd have an easier time if I beat on your skull for a little bit.

DARREN

My mother taught me to sing –

VINCE

But she didn't make you a star.

DARREN

Well, we're not selling "star," we're selling music –

VINCE

That's where you're wrong.

DARREN

I've got a great voice.

VINCE

You've had great exposure. You really think you'd be where you are today if I hadn't discovered you?

DARREN

You act like you're the *only* reason. Like you did the hard part.

VINCE

I did do the hard part: I invested.

DARREN

Money again!

VINCE

Makes mediocre singers like you superstars.

DARREN

Like me?

VINCE

Mediocre singers, like you.

DARREN hits VINCE.

DARREN

Is that why artists from other labels want me to sing on their records?

VINCE

Did you strike me?

DARREN

Nomad and a host of others you clearly don't know about at all?

VINCE

Did you just strike me?

DARREN

Is that why I get calls day and night from the biggest acts in the world asking me to guest on their recordings and tours? Is that why Disney execs want me to cover their latest musical number to roll during the credits?

VINCE yanks down disco ball from the rear view mirror.

DARREN

All of that happened because of you? Huh? Please. You might have been the starting power, but you're not the staying power: I am. I'm the staying power. (*Pause.*) Well? What have you got to say? I'm going to do whatever I want. (*Pause.*)

VINCE

Are you finished?

VINCE does not wait for an answer, and instead shatters the disco ball into DARREN's mouth.

VINCE

How do you think you're gonna sound without teeth? (*Pause.*) Not so mouthy now, are we?

DARREN garbles something and removes the ball from mouth, shaking.

VINCE

That's how *the Dylan* starts. Try to be all lax with me! I'll dump you on the side of the road! I'll kick you right out of the door at seventy miles an hour! Let's see you dance then – from your hospital bed.

DARREN

What did you just do?

VINCE

I remixed the disco era with your face. That's what I did. You just met the past, years of experience, face to face. How does it feel? Don't threaten me, don't interrupt me, and don't try to screw me. I'm owed, buddy, and the history of the industry is on my side: not yours!

DARREN

This... is crazy.

DARREN takes off hat, puts broken disco ball inside.

VINCE

You've got a couple of options right now if you don't want your mangled face plastered all over the tabloids tomorrow. Cheese.

VINCE takes photo of DARREN.

DARREN

Did I lose a... tooth?

VINCE

I created you, I can destroy you. I bought some of those teeth, and the tooth fairy is collecting! So it's time you learned a lesson. I can have you at the dentist in under an hour if you but say the word. I brought a contract for you to sign though, before we make that trip, if you *want* to make that trip. I brought it in case things got, well, ugly.

DARREN

I'm not signing anything.

VINCE

Choose your words carefully. (*Pause.*) Then kiss your career goodbye. I wish you luck with all the "talent," kid. I really do. No hard feelings or anything. Should I let you out here?

DARREN

What does it say?

VINCE

I get the profits from your little side projects... plus an extra bonus on everything else – retroactively.

DARREN

No way.

DARREN rips up contract.

VINCE

No? Okay.

VINCE gets on the phone.

VINCE

Cynthia... hi. I've got a pic I'm going to try to send you right now. Something terrible happened and I need you to send it out to the various press outlets as soon as it gets in.

DARREN

Wait!

VINCE

Cynthia, I'll call you back.

VINCE hangs up.

VINCE

What's the plan then? You ripped up my contract and I ripped up your face. What are we going to do?

DARREN

I'll sign the contract. (*Pause.*) I've known you for years. Come on – you've got another copy – just pull over and get it out of your briefcase.

VINCE

You do know me well. Here's a handkerchief.

DARREN

Thanks.

VINCE begins unbuckling from the car.

VINCE

I never doubted you'd come to your senses.

DARREN

You know best.

VINCE

That's correct.

DARREN

I wouldn't be where I am without you.

VINCE

You've got talent, kid. No one can take that away.

DARREN

I guess not.

VINCE

But you need the big money behind you. And you've always got to remember to pay those who propelled you.

DARREN

Sure.

DARREN strikes VINCE in the head with the disco ball. VINCE is knocked out.

DARREN

Pay back.

DARREN pushes VINCE out of the vehicle, closes the door, and begins to drive away.

DARREN

I can make it on my own just fine.

DARREN replaces the broken disco ball onto the rear view mirror.

DARREN

A reminder: this is a rough business.

END OF PLAY



THE EATER 3.0-3.4

KYLE REYNOLDS CONWAY

The Eater 3.0

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

JOHN

The would-be creator. A Grandfather who eats and fears in-between fits of gas problems and a constant itch on his neck.

AMES

The dreamer. The Grandchild who has a dream.

UR

The waiter. Brings food. Performs acts to relieve John's pains.

AMES

Grandfather?

JOHN

WHAT!?

AMES

I had a dream last night.

JOHN

NIGHTMARE!

AMES

No, it was wonderful.

JOHN

My nightmare, having to listen to it.

JOHN spits something out of his mouth onto the floor.

AMES

Oh. I'm terribly sorry, Grandfather.

JOHN

GO ON! GO ON! The record player has been corrupted to silence.

AMES

Well, there was a dog.

JOHN

To eat?

AMES

I didn't think so.

JOHN exhales in dissatisfaction and presses his hand to his chest.

AMES

At any rate, this dog –

JOHN

INEDIBLE MUTT!

AMES

– this dog started barking, for help – I understood – and I began to follow.

JOHN

Never follow a dog.

AMES

It was a dream though, Grandpa.

JOHN

Man's best friend – MARKETING SLOP!

AMES

I've never even seen a dog.

JOHN

Thank you, Grandpa.

AMES

Thank you, Grandpa, for never letting those inedible mutts near me.

JOHN

Forgiven.

AMES

Well, I followed this dog into your book room.

JOHN

You let a MUTT into the BOOK ROOM!?

JOHN starts coughing uncontrollably. Enter UR who pounds JOHN in the chest only once and very hard. JOHN's coughing stops. UR exits.

AMES

Grandpa, you really must calm yourself.

JOHN

With stories about MUTTS running around with my BOOKS!?! How, I ask you, could I possibly be calm?

AMES

I'll tell you my story later, after I've edited out the bits about the dog.

JOHN

I don't –

JOHN's stomach rumbles loudly.

JOHN

– I don't want to sit here listening to the sound of chewing and digestion. The music is broken so I'm stuck with you to quell the sound of my inner workings.

AMES

Well, this animal started to read. Read the most marvelous stories. And, before I knew it, had found several pieces of paper – blank ones – and pressed the pages, somehow, in between the pages of the marvelous stories and reproduced them.

JOHN

Stealing my books! Ha!

AMES

Not stealing.

JOHN

Not stealing? I thought it was a comedy! Perhaps it was indeed a nightmare! Stealing my books!

AMES

No, just – I don't know – creating another.

JOHN

Sounds like stealing to me! I'd have the inedible mutt's head!

AMES

But then –

JOHN

There's more? UR!

UR enters with more food. Removes first plate.

AMES

Then the animal took the pages, the ones that moments before were blank, and began folding them up. Triangles upon triangles. Up and down.

JOHN

Capable paws.

AMES

Left and right. This way and that. I watched intently.

JOHN

ANIMALS!

JOHN's face turns red. His hands grip the table. His face shakes. The tiniest, high pitched, toot escapes.

AMES

Should I go on?

JOHN

Wait.

There is a rumble. Then the sound of a bus lowering.

JOHN

Go on.

AMES

I started doing the folding and the, well the other one went back to the blank pages and the books.

JOHN

Stealing.

AMES

And I kept on folding until we'd finished the whole book room.

JOHN

How long were you asleep?

AMES

It was just a dream, Grandpa.

JOHN

Nightmare.

AMES

We took the folded pages to the window and started to throw them out.

JOHN

And why would you do that?

AMES

They didn't fall, Grandpa – they flew!

JOHN

They flew! Like birds. You'd created birds.

AMES

Not birds, but, we'd given the pages wings. I made one this morning. Look.

AMES produces a paper airplane.

JOHN

Does this have my writing on it?

AMES

No Grandpa.

JOHN

No words from my books?

AMES

No Grandpa.

JOHN

What does it do?

AMES

Watch.

AMES gets up and throws the airplane. It coasts across the room.

JOHN

That's all very interesting – but what does it do?

AMES

This is where things got – we were up high, so the pages kept flying and flying.

JOHN

Yes.

AMES

Farther than the eye could see. The wind took them everywhere. This way and that. All over. At first we just waited. The dog just stared at me.

JOHN

Mutt.

AMES

And –

JOHN

Did you think about eating the mutt?

AMES

No –

JOHN

You must have been hungry.

AMES

It was a dream, Grandpa.

JOHN

Nightmare. Go on.

AMES

Well we waited for a little while and then we heard a rumbling.

JOHN

Rumbling?

JOHN presses his fist to his chest.

AMES

A rumbling. There was a rumbling and it was small at first but it got louder.

JOHN

Thunder.

AMES

I thought that too, but then we saw the dust.

JOHN

Dust?

AMES

A growing horizon, from all sides, like the earth just stood up and spit particles of itself into the sky.

JOHN

The end of the world!

AMES

At first. But then it got closer. All around us closer. As if millions of gnats clouded the air. First dust, then gnats. Whatever it was, it was getting closer.

JOHN

A plague. A biblical plague! Exodus speaks of this.

AMES

Exodus?

JOHN

Just one of my books. Was it locusts?

AMES

No. Not locusts. As it approached the dog seemed happy. The dog was jumping and smiling. I tried to calm it down but the dog kept on wagging its tail and jumping all over everything.

JOHN

Damn mutt destroyed my library, didn't it!?

AMES

Every book.

JOHN

Every book!

JOHN begins clutching his chest, wheezing. JOHN motions "go on" to AMES. UR helps JOHN breathe in some ridiculous manner for a short period and then leaves.

AMES

I was worried about what you'd do when you found out, Grandfather. I really was. I'm sorry even that I dreamed it, but that's what happened. When the last book was destroyed the dog went to the window and peered out. It wasn't locusts, Grandfather

—

JOHN

What?

AMES

It was people.

JOHN

People?

AMES

So many people, as far as they eye could see, people. They were everywhere.

JOHN

UR!

AMES

At first I was frightened. I thought they brought war. I thought they brought anger and unhappiness.

JOHN

UR!

Enter UR.

JOHN

Desert and drinks! Now!

UR exits.

AMES

The dog wasn't afraid though.

JOHN

Wouldn't be, idiot mutt!

AMES

Like it knew something I didn't know.

JOHN

And what did it know?

AMES

That they were coming back.

JOHN

What was coming back?

AMES

The books.

All of the sudden paper airplanes start flying around the stage from every direction. UR brings desert as if nothing is happening.

JOHN

They came back.

AMES

Three of each book at least, and more books I'd never heard of. Books I'd never seen. Books you didn't have.

JOHN

But there was a catch, heh? Something was wrong. Right? Uh, something was amiss. They'd started the room on fire.

AMES

They were cheering.

JOHN

Cheering?

AMES

And clapping.

JOHN

Clapping.

AMES

Then came the scientists, the entrepreneurs, the authors and the artists. The bakers, the dancers, the musicians, and the teachers.

JOHN

They came clapping?

AMES

Cheering. Waving flags and banners. Then they showed what they had made to those who were gathered. They shared bread, and told tales, and sang songs and cured ill.

We hear the clapping, barely, along with the other sounds as they are described. Airplanes continue to fly. JOHN begins coughing uncontrollably.

AMES

Are you alright Grandfather?

JOHN, still coughing, motions AMES to continue.

AMES

And then the people behind them began dancing and drawing and telling stories and singing songs and curing ills. Waves of sharing, but both ways. The waves came back. The dance near us got better. The songs were fuller. New instruments were created and new stories were told – but they weren't new, they were improved. Modified.

JOHN presses his hand firmly to his chest, shakes and grunts:

JOHN

They learned.

AMES

They learned.

UR

From the books.

JOHN collapses to the floor.

AMES

Grandfather!

UR

It's –

AMES

Ur, help!

UR

I'm sorry. He's gone.

AMES

My story? Was it my story, Ur?

UR

No, no. It wasn't your story exactly.

AMES

No?

UR

No. It was his own fear. His own nightmare.

AMES

About what?

UR

Books.

AMES

His books are fine.

UR

His books are *only* his.

AMES

What do you mean?

UR

And now they're *only* yours.

AMES

I don't understand.

UR

Your Grandfather was almost an inventor, but he was afraid of what his invention might bring. So he kept it to himself.

UR picks up a paper airplane off of the ground and examines it.

AMES

Okay. So... what did he invent?

UR

Nothing.

UR throws the airplane to AMES.

UR

They're all blank.

UR drops other pages to the ground.

UR

He invented nothing.

UR leaves.

END OF PLAY

The Eater 3.1

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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AMES

The dreamer. The Grandchild who has a dream.

UR

The waiter. Brings food. Performs acts to relieve John's pains.

AMES

I had a dream last night.

JOHN

Not interested. Ur, get the music.

UR

It was broken, sir.

JOHN

We'll fix it.

UR

We've lost the manual.

JOHN

Drat!

He burps loudly. his stomach rumbles.

JOHN

I can't listen to this. Alright. Story.

AMES

My dream.

JOHN

Speak.

AMES

Really.

JOHN

Quickly!

AMES

Well there was a dog.

JOHN

I hate dogs

AMES

There was a dog and he took me to the book room.

JOHN

My book room?

AMES

Yes.

JOHN

Oh!

Presses hand to chest.

AMES

I know I should have shoed him out.

JOHN

Of course you should've shoed him out.

AMES

But it was a dream – I didn't.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Grandpa.

AMES

I'm sorry, Grandpa.

JOHN

Go on.

AMES

Well the dog could read.

JOHN

A reading dog?

AMES

And it read me all manner of books

JOHN

That is possibly marketable.

AMES

And I enjoyed the stories so much. I've never heard them.

JOHN

What books?

AMES

Your books.

JOHN

My books?

AMES

Yes.

JOHN

You can't read.

AMES

No. But you've told me titles... so it was those stories.

JOHN

Ha! Ha! Well, you couldn't have gotten them right.

AMES

They were wonderful in my dream.

JOHN

Go on.

AMES

Well, the dog read the whole book room to me.

JOHN

How long were you asleep?

AMES

It was a dream.

JOHN

Perhaps you need more chores.

AMES

I was asleep just as long as usual.

JOHN

Go on, then.

AMES

The dog found some paper.

JOHN

My paper?

AMES

It was in the room. Big stacks of it. Nothing written on it at all.

JOHN

Was it my paper?

AMES

Do you have paper?

JOHN

Go on.

AMES

Well, the dog pressed the blank pages in between the pages of the books, and when we pulled them out... they had the words on them?

JOHN

The words?

AMES

From the pages in the book.

JOHN has a minor heart attack/stroke.

AMES

Grandfather, are you alright?

JOHN

Go on! Go on! Stop stopping!

AMES

Well, it was perfect! Like having two books.

JOHN

Great story, kid. Very good.

AMES

That isn't all.

JOHN

It isn't?

AMES

No. We spent the rest of the year, maybe, making the pages from all of the books.

JOHN

Year?

AMES

Pressing each page between each sheet and carefully removing them.

JOHN

Stealing my books!

AMES

No, just making more. But –

JOHN

Sounds like stealing to me.

AMES

Well, then the dog taught me to fold.

JOHN

Fold?

AMES

I watched carefully, the dog folded the pages. Triangles here, creases there, one side over the other, then back again.

JOHN

Destructive!

AMES

No. We folded the whole room. I practiced his morning.

JOHN

What?

AMES

Here.

AMES shows JOHN a paper airplane.

JOHN

What does it do?

AMES

Watch.

AMES throws the plane, which sails across the room.

JOHN

I don't get it . What does it do?

AMES

Well, once we had folded all of the pages.

JOHN

Thieves!

AMES

We took each one and threw it out the window.

JOHN

Threw?

AMES

And they flew and flew and flew as far as the eye could see.

JOHN

where did they land.

AMES

That comes later. We didn't know at the time.

JOHN

Where did they land?

AMES

Just listen, Grandpa. There were so many in the air! It was magical.

Paper airplanes, slowly, begin populating the stage area. Ending, eventually, in cacophony.

AMES

At first it was slow... but eventually they were everywhere the eye could see. But when I turned around –

JOHN

The mutt, no doubt!

AMES

The mutt had destroyed all of your books!

JOHN

No!

JOHN has trouble breathing. UR enters and pounds once, hard, on his chest. UR exits.

JOHN

Why would the dog do that to me!

AMES

I was so scared –

JOHN

– I'd kill that dog –

AMES

– I didn't know what to do –

JOHN

– Wring its little neck with my bare hands –

AMES

– I started yelling at the dog –

JOHN

– Or maybe I'd wear gloves of some sort–

AMES

– screaming, really –

JOHN

– Protect my hands –

AMES

– And I was so loud –

JOHN

– Could have diseases –

AMES

– that I didn't hear –

Planes drop to the ground. A distant rumbling.

AMES

I didn't hear the earthquake

JOHN

You feel an earthquake

AMES

I looked out the window and, in the distance, there was a great dust rising up on the edges of the earth.

JOHN

Dust?

AMES

It looked like dust. A storm brewing far off in the distance.

JOHN

Couldn't be...

AMES

Until it got closer.

JOHN

And?

AMES

It looked like gnats!

JOHN

Gnats?

AMES

Thousands – more – of gnats swarming around... getting closer.

JOHN

The plagues!

AMES

And they kept getting closer.

JOHN

Closer?

AMES

Yes. closer.

JOHN

Locusts!

AMES

What?

JOHN

Were they locusts! Exodus speaks of this! UR! Ur! I knew! I knew! I was right!

AMES

What is Exodus?

JOHN

It's a book! A book of mine! Ur! Ur!

UR enters. JOHN hugs him. JOHN becomes out of breath.

JOHN

Continue!

AMES

Well, when they got closer we realized that they were people.

JOHN

People?

AMES

People.

JOHN

Carrying pitchforks?

AMES

That was my fear. That they brought war. I was trembling ...but the dog remained calm. Silent. Still.

JOHN

Stupid dog.

AMES

As if it was expecting something. I didn't know what.

JOHN

And?

AMES

And then they got closer.

JOHN

Did they destroy my library? Heathens!

AMES

They threw them back.

JOHN

What?

Airplanes overtake the stage again.

AMES

From every angle and every side. Your books. All of your books. And new books. Books I'd never heard of or read or dreamt. Books from the future. Books from the past. Modified books.

JOHN

Modified?

AMES

But it wasn't just books...

People enter the stage. Dancing, juggling, riding unicycles, painting pictures, curing diseases, teaching lessons, destroying alchemist tools, using calculators, computers, cell phones, etc...

JOHN

I don't understand.

AMES

They were so happy to have the books, Grandfather! They couldn't contain themselves.

JOHN

But then – then! – they destroyed civilization. All of humanity wept for the simpler times as the apocalypse was at hand.

AMES

Then they shared more!

People re-enter stage and briefly suggest what AMES implies.

AMES

They put things together. The people shared and built better calculators. Painters drew the movement of a dance, but not necessarily the dancer. Scientists shared their research instead of coveting it and learned even more about our world. The old was a pathway to the new. It wasn't so much replaced as improved.

JOHN

Ur! I'm having trouble with.

UR

It was for the best.

JOHN

Apparently not!

AMES

Grandfather it was so wonderful.

JOHN

Ur, I want you to show him the machine.

UR

Yes, sir.

AMES

What machine?

JOHN

Let him do with it what he will.

AMES

What are you talking about? It was only a dream, Grandfather.

JOHN

Whatever questions he asks, answer them – truthfully – and be certain to help him.

AMES

Grandfather, I'm sorry if I disturbed you. It was all so exciting.

JOHN

Do you understand me, Ur?

UR

Yes, sir.

JOHN

Ames, listen to me, make good on your dream.

AMES

I don't understand.

JOHN

Ur will explain everything.

AMES

What do you mean. Why don't you explain it to me?

JOHN

It's my time to go.

AMES

What do you mean?

JOHN

I've held things up long enough. I've held things up for far too long.

JOHN gets up to leave.

JOHN

And another thing, Ur, teach him to read.

AMES

Where are you going?

JOHN exits.

UR

Ames, come with me.

AMES

Where did Grandfather go?

UR

Your Grandfather wanted me to show you a secret machine adjacent to his book room. Would you please follow me?

AMES

Not until you tell me where my Grandfather has been.

UR

Trust me when I say this, the machine will explain everything.

AMES goes off with UR. As we fade out the voices of the joyous people grow louder.

END OF PLAY

The Eater 3.2

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

JOHN

The would-be creator. A grandfather who eats and fears in-between fits of gas problems and a constant itch on his neck.

AMES

The dreamer. The grandchild who has a dream.

UR

The waiter. Brings food. Performs acts to relieve John's pains.

JOHN and AMES at a table.

JOHN

Ur, come over here right now.

UR

You're going to want to hear what it is he has to say.

AMES

You really will, Grandpa! Just listen to this now.

JOHN

I'm hungry, so why would I want to listen to your dreams instead of my music? You listen to me. I enjoy my meals with music, not talk.

UR

Your ears hear speech as well as melody in the midst of your gnashing!

AMES

It's a fascinating story. I could've made it up but I didn't. Can I please tell you my story?

JOHN

Why don't you then? (*Pause.*) Get on with it!

UR

Don't wait till he changes his mind.

AMES

Where am I?

UR

Faster, boy!

JOHN

Shut up Ur!

UR

Listen to him!

JOHN

Can you please continue?

AMES

Yes.

UR

The dessert!

JOHN

Well you should get it then.

UR

You should get it. That was a bit harsh, wasn't it? I should feel worse, shouldn't I?

AMES

Can't I just tell the story?

UR

Spit it out then! It could take all day at this rate.

AMES

A dog tore apart your book room!

JOHN

The penalty is death.

UR

It is. I'll do the deed.

AMES

In my dream!

UR

Saved!

JOHN

I've never liked dogs.

UR

I like them. Please continue, Ames.

AMES

This dog made copies! He said, "Help me!"

JOHN

Stealing my books!

UR

Keep copying, Dog! Yes!

AMES

Then we folded the copied pages.

UR

Why did you fold them?

JOHN

Destroying the stolen papers!

AMES

"Stop!" That's what I told the dog. But he kept on folding! Eventually we threw them out the window.

UR

Wouldn't they just fall? That seems counterproductive.

JOHN

You're polluting my moat with that damn dog!

AMES

It's already polluted.

JOHN

It can always get worse. Keep tightening the noose.

UR

Oh! You're not going to kill anyone!

AMES

They were airplanes: they flew.

UR

Flight!

AMES

As far as the eye could see.

JOHN

Stop sending my pages out of my book room.

UR

You missed your chance years ago!

JOHN

I'd appreciate your silence on that point, Ur. It's too painful!

AMES

Get him a tissue, Ur.

UR

Why should I do that? He's done it to himself. Or is that too much information, John?

AMES

Just do it! His books are like his children!

UR

But should they be?

JOHN

Even thinking about them in disarray sets me off! Get me the tissue, Ur!

UR

Get him the tissue, Ames!

AMES

You'll be fired.

UR

He's been out of his mind for years! Just leave, Ur.

JOHN

But I need you, Ur. Don't you love me?

AMES

Shouldn't you be asking me?

JOHN

Get off of me you troubler!

UR hands JOHN a tissue.

UR

Use it sparingly.

AMES

Let me tell my story! "Stop throwing the pages dog." "Keep throwing them, woof." I didn't know where they were headed, but eventually the earth started shaking.

JOHN

God commanded: "An earthquake now." You'd heard this story, hadn't you, Ur?

AMES

Stop talking about Ur and start listening to me!

JOHN

You could tell the story too.

UR

I could. "Stop." That's what Ames kept telling the dream dog.

JOHN

Go on, Ur.

AMES

The ground rose up! It was like bugs in the distance and earthquakes approaching!

JOHN

The apocolypse as written in Revelation.

UR

You would think that! It was something else entirely. You'll tell him, won't you Ames?

JOHN

Ur always did keep the endings from me.

UR

Well you never really wanted to know the truth, did you? The bugs and the earthquakes were cheering people. They were waving flags and singing songs! "Let it see the light of day!" It's finally time, so do it now, John.

JOHN

Why are you bringing this up now?

UR

That's what Ames' dream is about, John.

AMES

You've both been hiding something from me!

JOHN

Get on with your story, Ames.

AMES

What are you hiding? (*Pause.*) They were singing songs from your books and telling stories you read to me and dancing dances painting pictures from the illustrations! They also flew copies of the lost pages back into the window, in gratitude.

JOHN

I don't understand.

AMES

Tell us, Ur!

UR

You were supposed to release your invention all those years ago!

JOHN

It would have been a disaster! The end times would have surely taken place.

UR

Show the boy. Oh, come on! Don't you owe it to him, at least?

JOHN

Get out of here, Ur!

UR

I'm sticking it out, sir.

JOHN

Are you sure that's wise?

UR

I am.

JOHN

You're wrong.

AMES

Just stop it! What was your invention, Grandpa?

UR

Tell him, John. He deserves to know; the world deserves to know. For the love of...!
You need to learn to *share*.

JOHN

You shut your mouth. And you stop being so nosy.

AMES

Just tell me. Or don't you want me to know?

JOHN

Stop being so nosy! I'm still not convinced it wouldn't end the world.

UR

What would convince you?

AMES

Grandfather, I need to know about your achievements! I want to have the shoulders
of your giant to stand on!

UR

He's a broken, angry, and foolish man who'll never say a word.

JOHN

Wouldn't you have done the same thing if you were in my position?

AMES

Tell me now!

JOHN

One day I'll die, so one day you'll know, and the end of the world will come. That's the truth. You should fear my invention, Ur. It certainly brings destruction and death!

AMES

If my dream was about your invention then it only brings happiness. You're wrong, Grandpa.

JOHN

Keep your opinions to yourself.

AMES

Why don't you love me?

JOHN

Focus on your own problems.

AMES

They can't be separated! We're blood.

UR

He's going to find out eventually anyway!

JOHN

Who's going to tell him? I'd love to see you try!

AMES

Tell me.

JOHN

Ask Ur!

AMES

Ur, what did my Grandfather invent?

UR

A copying machine!

AMES

What's a copying machine?

JOHN

It could mass produce texts, books, anything.

AMES

Like in my dream!

JOHN

But your dream is wrong!

AMES

Share your invention with the world, Grandfather.

UR

Please listen to him! It would do so much good.

JOHN

You think I'd release *my* device, my dangerous and powerful device, onto an unsuspecting world?

AMES

My own Grandfather doesn't believe in people.

JOHN

People are the lowest forms of human beings!

AMES

I think that you're wrong, Grandfather. And I'm going to do something about it.

JOHN

What are you going to do?

AMES hits his Grandfather with a plate.

UR

You've knocked him out! Quickly, go share the machine with the world before he wakes!

They exit together.

JOHN

I'm laying on the ground. No good can come from copying for the masses!

END OF PLAY

The Eater 3.3

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

JOHN

The would-be creator. A Grandfather who eats and fears in-between fits of gas problems and a constant itch on his neck.

AMES

The dreamer. The Grandchild who has a dream.

UR

The waiter. Brings food. Performs acts to relieve John's pains.

JOHN sits at a table. A nearby podium holds a single book. JOHN is eating gluttonously from the table in front of him. AMES sits nearby. Enter UR.

UR

Sir, someone at the door asking for a book.

JOHN

Tell them “no” again! Is it that theologian? The crockpot alchemist? Or is it one of the local girls who took a trip and now fancies herself a reader?

UR

The bard.

JOHN

Tell him to repeat the same story I gave him years ago! Greedy bard! The people love that tale!

UR

Yes, sir.

UR exits.

JOHN

Unbelievable! And during dinner! Everone knows that I dine daily at this hour!

AMES

Perhaps they’d forgotten, Grandfather.

JOHN

Bard should concoct his own stories anyway! No need to steal mine!

AMES

You didn’t write them, Grandfather.

JOHN

No but I, uh, paid for them. Payment is akin to ownership... and authorship!

AMES

May I tell you a story, Grandfather?

JOHN

I have my books for stories.

AMES

I promise you haven't heard this particular story before.

JOHN

I don't want to get lost in my book! I'm finishing my namesake's gospel this evening!

AMES

But this story is about your books.

JOHN

My books!

AMES

I dreamt of them last night.

JOHN

Did you now? And what do you know of my books?

JOHN presses his hand to his chest in pain.

JOHN

Hmmm?

AMES

Only what you've told me, but I imagined quite a bit.

JOHN

I, uh, am anxious to hear what you know. Carry on.

AMES

When I awoke I saw the sunlight low in the sky, just above the horizon. A bird on the roof crowed once –

We hear a crow in the distance.

AMES

– and then turned to look at me, but a dog –

JOHN

A dog!

AMES

– jumped to the window and scared it away.

JOHN

Where did you get a mangy mutt?

AMES

I didn't know.

JOHN

Is there a dog in this house, Ames?

AMES

No, Grandfather.

JOHN

Ur!

JOHN presses his hand to his chest again.

JOHN

Ur!

Enter UR.

UR

Yes, sir?

JOHN

Is there a dog in this house?

UR

None that I'm aware of, sir.

JOHN

Well keep those mangy mutts out. They give me hives and a terrible anxiety.

UR

As always, sir.

JOHN

(To AMES:) You're sure?

AMES

Only in my dream. After the dog had barked it led me to your book room.

JOHN

My book room?

AMES

Yes, Grandfather.

JOHN presses his hand to his chest.

AMES

Are you alright, Grandfather?

JOHN

Continue!

AMES

Well, the dog –

JOHN

Mangy mutt!

AMES

– it read the stories.

JOHN

The dog could read?

AMES

And then I could too.

JOHN

You could what? Read? Ha!

AMES

I could, Grandfather.

JOHN

Only the learned can read. The bard certainly can't read!

AMES

No?

JOHN

No! I had to read it aloud to him. It took ages. I'm surprised he's gathered the funds this soon, but it isn't worth my time!

AMES

Well, I could read.

JOHN

In your dream.

AMES

Yes. In my dream. And they were such wonderful stories. Just like you used to read to me before bed.

JOHN

Had to stop. You were giving the bard ideas – for free.

AMES

Yes, Grandfather. Well, the dog found a stack of pages next to a giant machine.

JOHN

In my book room! Ur!

AMES

Yes, Grandfather.

UR

Yes, sir?

JOHN

Has Ames been in my book room.

UR

No, sir. Locked, as you requested it always is to be.

JOHN

What kind of machine?

AMES

A very large one, with a big screw on top.

JOHN presses his hand to his chest.

JOHN

Ur!

UR comes over and hits JOHN once in the chest, very hard.

UR

Sir?

JOHN

Fine. Fine.

AMES

The dog tightened the screw on the machine and books came out! Books I'd just read. I was holding the same book in each hand!

JOHN

In my book room! Stealing my books!

AMES

We put your books back, Grandfather. No one was stealing them.

JOHN

And what about the others, huh? What about them!

AMES

This is the interesting part! We flew them!

JOHN

Flew them?

AMES

The dog showed me.

AMES takes out a blank piece of paper.

AMES

Once in half, and then into triangles, flatten it out, and there we are!

JOHN

What is it?

AMES

Watch.

AMES throws the paper airplane across the room.

JOHN

Throwing my books!

AMES

Not your books, just the extra ones that the dog made with the machine.

JOHN

What a mess! Dispicable.

AMES

We threw them out of the window.

JOHN

Into the moat?

AMES

No! They sailed for miles and miles. As far as the eye could see. Past the horizon.

JOHN

You gave away my books!

JOHN breathes heavily and puts his hand to his chest.

AMES

Ur!

UR comes closer, hits JOHN in the chest once more, and then whispers:

UR

I think you should listen to the rest of his story, sir. Have a drink of water.

JOHN

Uh, yes. Thank you, Ur. And then, Ames?

AMES

We waited. The dog just waited and I just waited. I was almost asleep when that bird crowed again. The dog chased it off.

JOHN

Mangy mutt!

AMES

But then I saw that I *had* fallen asleep. The dog had, well, ripped apart the book room.

JOHN

Every book... ripped apart.

AMES

Every one. And then I heard a rumbling.

JOHN

An earthquake.

AMES

I thought so, but it got closer.

JOHN

Closer?

AMES

Closer. I saw something in the distance, at the horizon. Dust? Gnats?

JOHN

Locusts.

AMES

But it kept getting closer.

JOHN

A plague! You see, Ur! It would have destroyed everything! I was right!

UR

Just listen.

AMES

But then I saw what it was.

JOHN

What?

AMES

People.

UR

People.

JOHN

People? With pitchforks, anger, and hatred!

UR

No.

AMES

They were cheering. And then...

UR

And then...

Suddenly paper airplanes fly onto the stage from every angle continuously.

JOHN

What were they?

AMES

Your books –

UR

– and new books –

AMES

– books you've never read –

UR

– in languages you've never heard of –

AMES

– on every subject –

UR

– and sub-subject –

AMES

– and combination of subjects –

UR

– the whole of human understanding –

AMES

– available to everyone –

UR

– and the progress! –

AMES

– They built great machines –

UR

– and art –

AMES

– and medicines –

UR

– and narratives –

AMES

– and kept improving them –

UR

– combining them –

AMES

– remixing them –

UR

– until.

JOHN

– until?

AMES

– until I woke up.

The airplanes stop entering the stage and fall motionless to the ground.

UR

You see?

JOHN places his hand to his heart. Eyes widen. He scrambles to open his book.

JOHN

Read it!

UR reads where JOHN's finger points.

UR

“Thus ends my account of what Jesus had done in his life. There was more, of course, but the earth has not enough hands to record it all.”

JOHN

Agh!

JOHN falls down.

JOHN

Go. Go! Show him!

JOHN dies.

AMES

Grandfather?

UR

He is gone.

AMES

Grandfather!

UR

The machine you dreamed is real. Your Grandfather feared what it might bring, wrongly, so he kept it hidden away. Please, sir, allow me to show you.

AMES

To create books?

UR

Yes. And to share them.

AMES stands.

AMES

Then let us start with the bard.

They exit. A cock crows again.

END OF PLAY

The Eater 3.4

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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AMES

The dreamer. The Grandchild who has a dream.

UR

The waiter. Brings food. Performs acts to relieve John's pains.

AMES, JOHN and UR: Full front and at the same time:

AMES

Sharing!

JOHN

Stealing!

UR

Secrets!

Pause. Pause. Pause. JOHN sits. AMES stands. UR goes to a back corner. JOHN pretends to eat an imaginary leg of meat.

AMES

Grandfather, I had a dream last night about your book room and a dog and I'd like to share it –

JOHN

Can't you see I'm in the middle of my meal!?

JOHN brandishes his imaginary leg. AMES turns away.

AMES

You never let me into the room, Grandfather. I'm older now. You'll die someday. I want to learn to read like you.

AMES looks at JOHN:

JOHN

More food!

UR

Yes, sir!

UR takes the imaginary leg bone and replaces it with an imaginary leg full of meat. JOHN goes back to eating. UR returns to a corner.

AMES

Then let me tell you this, Grandfather. In my dream the dog and I destroyed every single one of your precious books – ripped them all to shreds.

JOHN stops eating and presses his hand to his chest in pain. UR hits his chest once, hard, and returns to his corner.

JOHN

I told you to stay away from my books! And you know how I feel about mangy mutts, so let me just say that I am very disappointed in –

AMES

So you'll listen? To my story, my dream, you'll listen then?

JOHN throws leg behind him. UR catches it. UR brings JOHN an imaginary goblet. They all rise, full front and in unison:

AMES

Sharing!

JOHN

Stealing!

UR

Secrets!

JOHN sits and drinks. UR returns to his corner. AMES stares at UR.

AMES

I awoke to the sound of barking. The dog led me to your book room. It turned out that the dog could read. This was fortuitous because the dog taught me to read as well. I loved – *loved!* – the stories in your bookroom, Grandfather. Magical places, fantastical –

JOHN

Get on with it, illiterate disgrace, I'm getting hungry.

Ames looks at UR. UR nods at AMES.

AMES

There was a secret wall, the dog found it, behind which was a large machine and blank pieces of paper stacked in a huge pile. The dog and I –

JOHN stops AMES with a single raised finger.

JOHN

Ur!?

UR

Not a single word, sir.

UR raises a hand, as if in oath.

AMES

The dog took the pages, pressed them with the machine, and made more books. I held the same book, the very same book, in each of my hands at once. It was a miracle! A miracle! But then the dog folded the pages: across, down, in triangles. Here...

AMES folds a paper airplane. JOHN looks back at UR with a scowl.

JOHN

Just what does it do, Ames?

AMES

Watch.

AMES throws the paper airplane into the audience. The three watch as it soars. Pause. They stand full front and in unison:

AMES

Sharing!

JOHN

Stealing!

UR

Secrets!

JOHN sits, UR returns to corner, AMES stands. AMES throws another airplane into the audience. We are re-seeing the event that just took place moments ago.

AMES

Each and every page of each word and every book: soaring through the sky. It was something to see! So many pages that they nearly blocked out the setting sun before fading beyond the horizon. And then –

JOHN

And then what? What!? Get on with it! Speak!

AMES drinks from JOHN's imaginary goblet. JOHN signals UR for another and receives it.

AMES

We waited.

AMES takes another drink.

JOHN

What a worthless story!

UR

Go on! Tell him the best part!

JOHN glares at UR.

AMES

The horizon swelled up. It grew. The earth shook. Before I knew it the dog had destroyed all of the original books.

AMES drinks. JOHN stands.

JOHN

Destroyed! My books! That mangy –

AMES

Every last one, Grandfather.

AMES drinks. JOHN drinks. UR comes forward. Full front and in unison:

AMES

Sharing!

JOHN

Stealing!

UR

Secrets!

JOHN takes another drink. UR sits down in JOHN's chair. AMES full front.

AMES

At first I thought it was dust, but it wasn't. Then gnats, but it wasn't. Then something larger –

JOHN

Locusts! A plague! Didn't I tell you, Ur? Ha! Ha ha! Ha ha ha!

JOHN does a dance of joy. UR motions for AMES to continue.

AMES

It was people.

JOHN stops dancing. UR stands joyously.

JOHN

People?

UR

People!

JOHN sits down. UR assists him.

AMES

As far as the eye could see! All the way to the horizon: people. I couldn't believe my eyes. I'd never seen so many people before.

JOHN scratches his head nervously. JOHN begins laughing sinisterly.

JOHN

It was a clever ploy! Ha! The devil is in the details and the details are clear – it was destruction and anger those people brought, wasn't it? Pitchforks and torches and weapons of all kinds, furrowed brows and clenched fists! All of them: men, women and children ready for a fight the likes of which–

AMES

They were dancing, Grandfather! Smiling from ear to ear! They were telling the stories from your books, singing the songs from your pages, and wearing clothes only described in your stories till then. Not only that, but –

JOHN silences AMES with a single finger. UR lowers his head. AMES looks to JOHN. All full front and in unison:

AMES

Sharing!

JOHN

Stealing!

UR

Secrets!

JOHN motions UR to come near him. UR refuses, and moves opposite of AMES.

AMES

Not only had they shared your books, and benefitted greatly from them, Grandfather, but they'd improved them, combined them, united them, expanded them and learned from them. And do you know what happened next?

JOHN

Tell me!

JOHN leans toward AMES, then grips him tightly. Momentary tableaux.

AMES

Everything you shared, and more... everything came back.

Paper airplanes from every direction fly onto the stage, and continue to indefinitely. All watch.

JOHN

More?

UR

Your invention was for the good!

UR places hand on JOHN's shoulder.

AMES

Let's use it, Grandfather. Let's share it with the world!

Planes continue to fly. JOHN smiles a big, genuine smile.

JOHN

Let's go to my book room! Quickly!

AMES

Grandfather! Thank you! The world will rejoice over what you've done!

*AMES kisses JOHN. UR pats JOHN on the back. JOHN begins laughing.
All full front and in unison:*

AMES

Sharing!

JOHN

Sharing!

UR

Sharing!

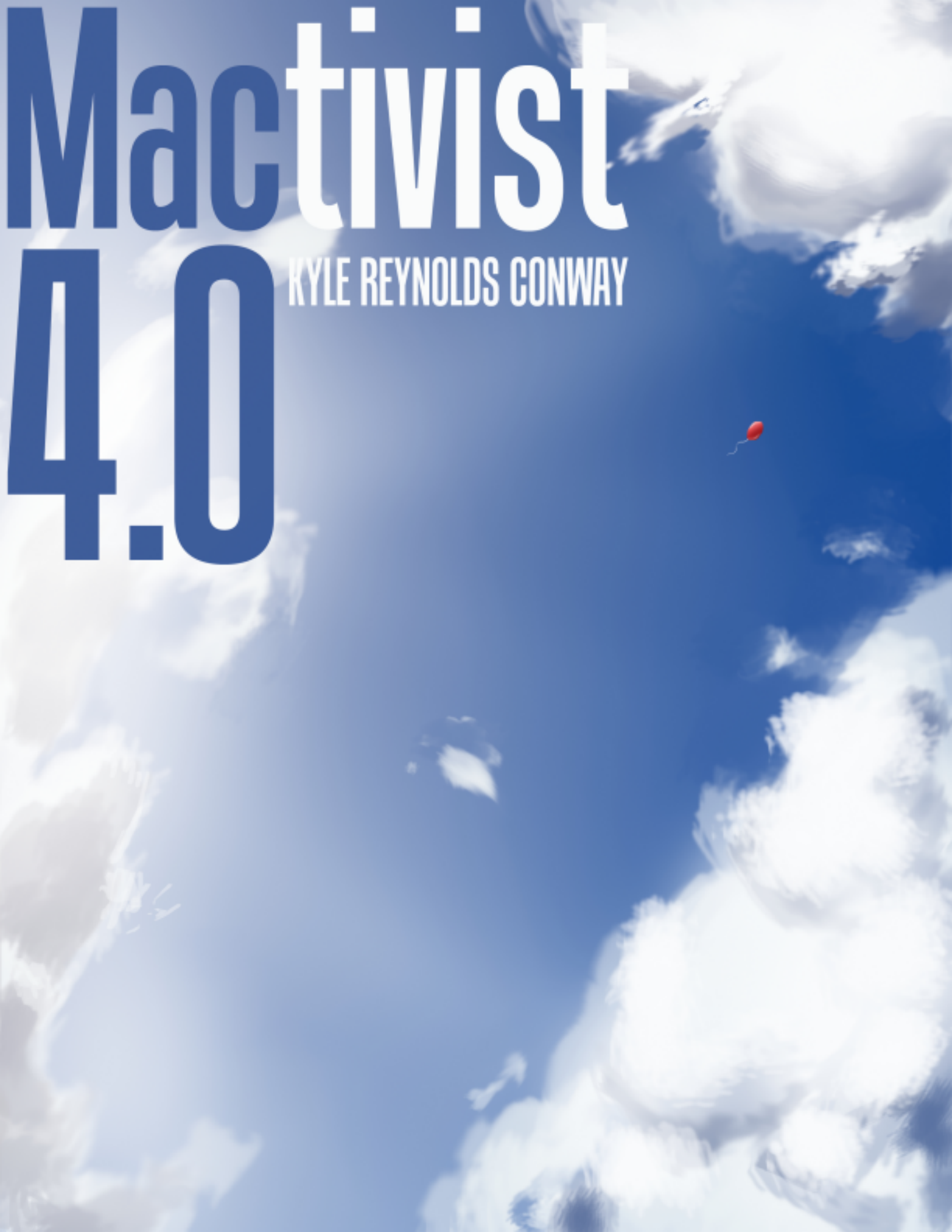
The planets align. The stars shine brigher. A universal sigh.

END OF PLAY

Mactivist

KYLE REYNOLDS CONWAY

4.0



Mactivist 4.0

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MAGICIAN

A magician looking for awe/wonder.

BARTENDER

Owns a bar.

Low light. A rough looking man wearing a very small, black clown nose enters. He plays with a coin.

MAGICIAN

Don't ever ask me that again. Come on! You've got enough footage already. I'm a loser, okay. "A has-been." I've given up. I'm sick of doing this for people. Making them "happy," or whatever, with lies. It's all a joke. I've... I've got better things to do now, okay. Good luck with your project and whatever. I've just...

MAGICIAN snaps fingers. Blackout. Sound of a coin being flipped: loud. Lights up. Stage is empty. V.O. of MAGICIAN.

V.O. MAGICIAN

Come back later.

The voice echoes. Quickly enter BARTENDER.

BARTENDER

Come on over here again! I want my money back you awful cheat! How'd you do *that!*

Enter MAGICIAN with a bright red clown nose.

MAGICIAN

I was never gonna take your money. Here.

MAGICIAN places coin in BARTENDER's hand.

BARTENDER

Then are you ever gonna pay your tab?

The both laugh warmly.

MAGICIAN

Look in your hand.

Bartender opens hand to see handwritten I.O.U.

BARTENDER

An IOU! Are you kidding me! Give me the coin!

MAGICIAN

I don't deserve a tip?

BARTENDER

Do it again.

MAGICIAN

Only once. Magician's rule.

BARTENDER

Tomorrow then, alright? My kids'll be here. They're gonna go nuts! I have no idea – at all – how you do stuff like that but I'll tell you one thing: don't come in here on poker night or someone'll kill you. Cards flying across the room by themselves!

MAGICIAN

There's a logical explanation, honest.

BARTENDER

Tell me then!

MAGICIAN

Naw, I can't do that.

BARTENDER

And just why can't you?

MAGICIAN

Because it wouldn't be magic anymore.

Light shift. BARTENDER exits. Low light as before. MAGICIAN's nose returns to black.

MAGICIAN

So yeah, I was looking for something new. See, the trouble with magic is that you know how it's done: you have to in order to do it. At a certain point it gets kind of, uh, dull I guess. Look, if I... okay, when I was a kid my uncle would take my nose off – did this happen to you? – and he'd hold it between his two fingers like this and wave it around before eventually giving it back. Now, if you were young enough to believe, even for a split second, that he had taken your nose off of your face, you experienced wonder – well, maybe just concern if you were really little – but once you figure out it's just his thumb in there, or you touch your face and figure it out it can't be your nose – and then discover the thumb – it's no longer special, there's no *awe*. Does that make sense? That's why I wear a fake nose.

MAGICIAN pulls it off.

MAGICIAN

If somebody tries to take it off me, like my uncle, I know it really wasn't a part of my face in the first place. Anyway, I'm right handed, so I keep it safe in there.

MAGICIAN moves nose to right hand.

MAGICIAN

Watch this.

MAGICIAN moves right hand to face and blows hard.

MAGICIAN

This gets harder when you're older. It's supposed to pop out the other side like a champagne cork, you know?

MAGICIAN blows hard again. This time a black balloon comes out the other end.

MAGICIAN

That's gonna look ridiculous on my nose! I'm not a freak or anything.

MAGICIAN sneezes. While wiping with a hanky:

MAGICIAN

Here you go.

MAGICIAN tries to hand it to someone in the audience, let's it go and it flies everywhere.

MAGICIAN

I got extras anyway.

The original nose is back on MAGICIAN's face.

MAGICIAN

Nobody takes my nose.

Enter BARTENDER.

BARTENDER

What... uh...

BARTENDER motions to his own nose.

BARTENDER

... happened here then?

MAGICIAN

Teenage punks on 3rd. Stole my nose.

BARTENDER

I was getting used to it. I almost didn't recognize you.

MAGICIAN

Yeah?

BARTENDER

Yeah. (*Pause.*) Hey, what's wrong? Cheer up. It was only a nose, right?

MAGICIAN

They called me a fake.

BARTENDER

Hey, listen to me now! I get people coming in here with their “talents” every day of the week – even a few magicians – and you are not a fake. You're the real deal. I've never seen anybody do the stuff you do. Let me get you a drink.

MAGICIAN

I realized that it's all a lie. None of it is real.

BARTENDER

Sure seems real to me.

MAGICIAN

But it isn't. It's fake.

BARTENDER

So what? I have no idea how you do those things... those *amazing* things?

MAGICIAN

I know you don't... but I do. That's the problem.

Light shift. Exit BARTENDER. MAGICIAN's nose returns to black.

MAGICIAN

It just got... I don't know... boring. Sure, people would smile and laugh and gasp – or whatever – but I felt like a liar. I felt like a salesman, on commission, selling snake oil and other mythical cures for mythical ailments.

MAGICIAN performs.

MAGICIAN

See this coin? Watch. You think it's in this hand, don't you? Well, guess what, it's not. Were you fooled?

MAGICIAN shows coin in the other hand.

MAGICIAN

An honest person would put the coin in their hand, and if someone said "it's in *that* hand," then they'd open their hand and it would be.

MAGICIAN does, and it is.

MAGICIAN

Isn't that more honest? I don't know. At any rate, I decided to look for real magic. Something to amaze me.

Sound of a shuttle taking off.

MAGICIAN

At first I looked to the skies. But it turns out they just defunded NASA. Whatever magic there was, I guess, is dead now. Thanks, America.

Sound of bleeps and boops.

MAGICIAN

Then I looked into computers... but they told me that people actually sat down and wrote out commands, telling the computer exactly what to do. They could be complex, sure, but they weren't *magic*. "Goodbye, world."

Sound of birds chirping, planes soaring, keys clicking, etc.

MAGICIAN

I tried a great many things before I finally discovered real magic: Wall Street. They quite literally make money appear and disappear at will. At first it was incredible. Exhilarating. Like pulling money out of the sky.

MAGICIAN pulls money from the air.

MAGICIAN

“A quarter?” You say – “No no! That’s a twenty dollar bill!”

MAGICIAN makes a quarter into a twenty dollar bill.

MAGICIAN

But when I asked to see the money, swim in it, I was thrown out. It turned out there was a man behind the curtain.

MAGICIAN pulls out a handkerchief.

MAGICIAN

Something lurking below – beneath – it all.

MAGICIAN reveals a computer chip behind the handkerchief.

MAGICIAN

Computers. Or at least screens. Programs. Code. None of the money was real. Only projected, expected, calculated, etc... (*Pause.*) Theoretical. They had lots of trickery hidden up their sleeves on the street of walls.

MAGICIAN rolls up his sleeves.

MAGICIAN

I wish it were a proper wall instead of a street though. That way they would take a dive like Humpty Dumpty. But, as we’ve learned, all the king’s horses and all the king’s men have no trouble putting them back together again.

MAGICIAN rips up and restores a popular financial newspaper. Enter BARTENDER listening.

BARTENDER

Whoa! Amazing. Bravo! But I kind of wish you’d have kept the paper in shambles. Better symbolism, right?

MAGICIAN

If only they'd put NASA back together again – at least then we could dream of the stars: something must be out there. Magic probably.

BARTENDER

So you've been all those places this past year?

MAGICIAN

I have.

BARTENDER

And you came back to magic. Good for you. You're good at it.

MAGICIAN

I prefer the term *mactavist*.

BARTENDER

What?

MAGICIAN

Magic/Activist.

BARTENDER

Well, that'll go over well at the kids' birthday parties.

MAGICIAN

Teaching with handkerchiefs, coins, balls...

BARTENDER

...and a nose.

MAGICIAN

Some things never change.

BARTENDER

Are you awed? Inspired?

MAGICIAN

Only by everything around me. I've distilled it all into magic.

BARTENDER

I'll drink to that.

MAGICIAN

Me too.

Bartender holds out the glass, tentatively.

MAGICIAN

What?

BARTENDER

I thought that maybe you were gonna make it disappear.

MAGICIAN

Not this time. However...

MAGICIAN produces several bills from under the glass.

MAGICIAN

...this should cover my tab.

END OF PLAY

Mactivist 4.1

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MAGICIAN

A magician.

BARTENDER

Owns a bar.

CLOWN

A clown who tells a joke.

NEWS WOMAN

A reporter covering the wrong story. It isn't really funny.

Enter BARTENDER. Bottle of whisky in one hand. Shot glass in other.

BARTENDER

My cup...

Bartender pours whiskey into shot glass... keeps pouring.

BARTENDER

...overfloweth. But it's a small cup.

MAGICIAN

Can I show you a trick?

BARTENDER

I've long since given up on being impressed.

MAGICIAN

Take these rings for instance. I can take these two separate rings and put them together.

BARTENDER

I've seen it before.

MAGICIAN

So you know the trick? That isn't fair.

BARTENDER

I don't know the trick. I just know the ending. Same difference.

Sound of a crowd. Loud conversation, feet walking, shuffling, etc. MAGICIAN and BARTENDER react as if they are in a crowd of people.

BARTENDER

Get out of my damn way why don't you! I've got drinks to serve and yours'll be last – if ever – if you don't stop getting in my way.

MAGICIAN

How about a trick?

BARTENDER

Okay.

MAGICIAN

As payment.

BARTENDER kicks MAGICIAN out of the bar. Sound stops – or is muffled – in an alley.

MAGICIAN

Nobody likes my tricks. I've got coins and newspapers and balls. Tricks with all of those things. Used to dress up like a clown.

A clown walks on stage and stands.

MAGICIAN

That didn't work out though. People want you to be *nice* when you're a clown. I can't be nice when I'm a clown. Why should I be nice when I'm a clown? Doesn't make a lick of sense to me. I became a clown so I could be a depressed magician in disguise.

CLOWN

My grandfather delivered newspapers during the great depression.

MAGICIAN

Sorry about that, then.

CLOWN

He was *never* depressed about anything. I guess he figured it was always better than when he was delivering papers during the great depression.

MAGICIAN begins lighting up a cigarette.

MAGICIAN

But we've kind of got a depression going on now don't we?

CLOWN

Do you mind?

MAGICIAN

Not at all. I'm sure your grandfather was a lovely person and all, but I've got suicidal thoughts to calculate on at the moment.

CLOWN

My grandmother lost a lung to smoking.

MAGICIAN

Well I'm not gonna need a lung if I kill myself, am I?

Enter NEWS WOMAN w/ microphone and direct light above torso.

NEWS WOMAN

A strange sight tonight according to local residents who report a clown, a magician, and a disappearing act gone wrong. Coming up at ten, only on channel ten.

Lights off of NEWS WOMAN.

NEWS WOMAN

Okay, so what happened? This sounds like the beginning to a bad joke, the end of a bad date, or a really bad pickup line.

MAGICIAN

I'm standing right here!

CLOWN

No you're not.

Enter BARTENDER. Loud noise from people inside bar spills out.

BARTENDER

Quiet down out there!

Exit BARTENDER.

CLOWN

You heard him.

NEWS WOMAN

You try standing in a dark alley at night reporting on material for a standup routine.

MAGICIAN

He could've at least told us the score.

CLOWN

What are you looking at?

NEWS WOMAN

When do we go live? Three?

MAGICIAN

The stars, clown, the stars. I'm trying to find my way out of this hell hole.

CLOWN

It's all one point perspective in here – all the way into the wall of another building. That's how cities are, you know. The only way out is up.

MAGICIAN

You wanna see a trick?

CLOWN

You wanna hear a joke?

MAGICIAN

God it smells bad back here.

CLOWN

Seafood place.

NEWS WOMAN

I am never eating at *La Mer* again. Eck!

MAGICIAN

Tell your joke.

CLOWN

So, alright, get this:

CLOWN blows up a balloon. Coughs.

CLOWN

Are you gonna put that out? If nothing else you're clouding the very stars you aspire to!

MAGICIAN

Fine.

MAGICIAN puts out cigarette. Motions for CLOWN to continue. NEWS WOMAN picks up cigarette MAGICIAN discarded and returns to her area. She lights it.

NEWS WOMAN

I swear, Larry, you tell anybody about this and I'll kill you.

CLOWN

So. The balloon is full. Let's call the air in the balloon all the money in the world.

MAGICIAN

Okay.

CLOWN

Good. You hold it.

NEWS WOMAN

Was that thunder?

MAGICIAN holds the balloon.

CLOWN

Okay. Good. Now – are you ready? – now I’m the government. “We need to regulate the cash flow resources of exponential growth with GDP to compete with other countries where children are left behind, and we can’t leave children behind, which is why we’ll enact the laws, with help from corporations and bigger-than-you nonsensical algorithms provided by our proprietary beneficiaries of the tax code and the lawmaking process on Wall Street – it fell over during the depression, you see – for the benefit of defunct technologies and ancient, yet intact, monopolies salvaged by abuse of the law and a fear of the code – and for the children! Always for the children! – I propose to bring – to bring to committee – to take a vote – to listen to the American people – to listen to the business-owning American people – to propose the will of the business-owning American and non-American investors – but on behalf of the children! Sweet corn and subsidies: The children! – to follow the beaureaucratic tape, the lines in red, the – oh cover it with paint and move quickly for another campaign is around ye olde corner –

CLOWN removes a huge mallot from behind back.

CLOWN

– we need more money! Be it make believe, belittled, or squeezed from the American taxpayer – citizen of course – or the demon-headed mutli-faceted organizations checking the checks and balances – demon-headed! – *hold that balloon steady!* – in the name of America!

MAGICIAN

Wait!

CLOWN swings with great might and strength, bursting the balloon and conking MAGICIAN swiftly with a flourish after the spin. MAGICIAN hits the pavement. More thunder/lightening.

NEWS WOMAN

A clown, a magician, and an oversized mallet get thrown out of a bar. Can you guess what happens next? After the break at ten on ten. – Get on with it!

CLOWN turns MAGICIAN's face toward the sky.

CLOWN

You see those stars? It's going to rain soon. But do you see those stars? All bright shining in the sky? Do you see them, magic man? You think you can get away by going up. Vertigo gets you when you walk down corridors like this one for too long. When you're tired of seeing the gridwork of bricks, carefully laid, as you walk along the pavement.

MAGICIAN

It's not a funny joke, clown.

CLOWN

The buildings cast shadows, bigger than people, on the people they oppress. If I created money with air and a mallet, think of what you can do.

MAGICIAN

What?

CLOWN

We've got all sorts of money for all sorts of things benefitting everyone else – but we don't have money to dream. We don't have money to *dream*. You heard about NASA right? They shut it down? The space program: gone. Like that.

MAGICIAN

Can you call an ambulance.

CLOWN

I called 'em before the joke.

We hear sirens and thunder in the distance.

MAGICIAN

If I ever see you again...

CLOWN

You'll thank me, cause I told you what your job is: you're the space program. You're wonder and awe and the whole lot of it that the people making air out of air at the expense of the lungs of others – smoking or not – can never do. They don't do magic because they're liars. You do magic – but you tell the truth.

MAGICIAN

I don't get it.

CLOWN

The secret is the punchline of my joke.

MAGICIAN

No!

CLOWN

Tell the story of something real while wowing with your awe-making magic.

Lightening. Blackout. Light on NEWS WOMAN from torso up.

NEWS WOMAN

I've got a story straight out of a comic book. A magician and a clown enter a dark –

MAGICIAN

Can I show you a trick? It's about monetary allocation in congress. Let me see your hands.

NEWS WOMAN

Okay. Larry, can you hold the microphone?

MAGICIAN

I'm going to put a quarter in this hand, that's the take home pay of the government, roughly, our taxes. Can I borrow your handkerchief?

NEWS WOMAN

Okay.

MAGICIAN

We'll call this the *obscuring cloth of naming and details*.

NEWS WOMAN

What's that for?

MAGICIAN

We call it misdirection. Now I lift the handkerchief and –

NEWS WOMAN

Where did the coin go?

MAGICIAN

Start asking that question instead.

MAGICIAN walks away quickly.

NEWS WOMAN

Instead of what?

BARTENDER opens door, noise spills out:

BARTENDER

Quiet down out here!

NEWS WOMAN

Can I interview you. Did you see a magician and a clown tonight?

Blackout. Lights up. CLOWN and MAGICIAN.

CLOWN

That is, what?

MAGICIAN

The wrong question.

CLOWN

Have your representatives misdirected you today?

MAGICIAN

That is, what?

CLOWN

Get it?

Blackout.

END OF PLAY

Mactivist 4.2

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MAGICIAN

A magician.

FATHER

Magician's father.

CLOWN

A clown.

CLOWN and FATHER on opposite sides of the stage in single beams of light. Both are humming a drone: think bagpipe. A light shines on MAGICIAN center stage. Drone is continuous. MAGICIAN begins blowing up a balloon.

MAGICIAN

A long time ago, when I was a kid, I saw a magician do amazing things. Coins appeared from thin air, disappeared while in my very own hand, and then reappeared behind my ear, or in my hair, or even up my nose. It was pretty amazing stuff. I always thought that magicians were modern day sorcerors, miracle makers, living proof of the existence of the supernatural in our world.

MAGICIAN ties off balloon and looks at for a moment before popping it. Droning stops.

MAGICIAN

Then I figured out how it was done. Misdirection, glue, rubber bands, “invisible” strings, fake pockets, handkerchiefs, coats, sleeves, boxes, mirrors, smoke, trap doors, hidden poles and pretty girls wearing sequins over here while something important is happening over there. And guess what? You just missed it.

MAGICIAN reproduces a balloon, full of air. Droning starts again.

MAGICIAN

I thought I was going to give up when I found out that the coin was in the other hand. I thought that I was going to give up when I discovered that the box was fake, the mirror was right there, or that pretty girls are there to make the eye wander to the wrong place at the right time. I thought that I would, but I didn't.

CLOWN

Magic is so much more than that.

MAGICIAN

I met a clown, someone I came to trust, strangely, who helped me understand that I wasn't peddling a lie. I was creating wonder.

CLOWN stops droning. FATHER drones loudly and then stops. CLOWN enters the scene.

MAGICIAN

It's just that, I don't know, it's all a lie.

CLOWN

Magic is so much more than that.

MAGICIAN

How? I mean, look – I put the coin in this hand, but I don't really, and I say “where's the coin?” and they choose this hand but it was never even there in the first place!

CLOWN

You feel like a sham? A swindler. Another couple of “S” words?

MAGICIAN

Along with some other letters of the alphabet too!

CLOWN

Because they give you money.

MAGICIAN

Exactly! They give me money and I lie to them.

CLOWN

It's the same as a shell game, right?

MAGICIAN

Exactly.

CLOWN

You move the shells quickly around with a lot of flash, but they can't ever guess correctly because they're all wrong – the spinning is just for show.

MAGICIAN

That's exactly what it is! Exactly!

CLOWN

There's one little problem though.

MAGICIAN

And what is that?

*CLOWN drones loudly and returns to behind. FATHER stops droning.
CLOWN stops droning. FATHER enters the scene.*

FATHER

Don't ever let me catch you doing that nonsense again.

MAGICIAN

I'm sorry, Father.

FATHER

You worship the devil or something? Huh? You worship the devil!? Don't make the same mistake as those other liars! "Séance," they say. "Séance!" Magic words. Communicate with the beloved! Communicate with liars and thieves. That's what magicians are – birds of prey eating the sorry hearts of the empathetic living. If you feel you are a target and if you associate with them then you are a traitor to this family!

MAGICIAN

I'm sorry!

FATHER

If your Mother – after what those lying thieves did to me – if she found out what you've been doing I don't...

MAGICIAN

Dad, I know...

FATHER

What is it. Show it to me. What have you been... roll up your sleeves.

MAGICIAN

What?

FATHER

That's one place the liars tell their lies. Tambourines, sticks, strings, flashing lights.
Come on. Out with it!

MAGICIAN

Just this coin.

FATHER

Get rid of it.

CLOWN begins droning. FATHER begins returning to the back.

MAGICIAN

But it's just a coin.

FATHER

It's tainted now.

FATHER begins droning.

MAGICIAN

It's tainted now.

FATHER

It's tainted now.

CLOWN

Magic is so much more than that.

MAGICIAN

Magic is...

*MAGICIAN throws the coin across the stage. Drone gets louder and stops.
CLOWN and FATHER exit.*

MAGICIAN

My mother died having me. The universe was getting square, I guess. A life for a life. After my father kicked me out I was alone for a very long time. I tried to find something that could line up with my father's expectations.

CLOWN and FATHER return, next to each other in the darkness and drone.

MAGICIAN

It was hard. At first I thought I could get by without magic in my life. Without resorting to what he told me was selling my soul by casting my lot with the liars of the world. I had crossed a line with him that I could never cross again. The bridge was burned by anger and disappointment.

FATHER

It's tainted now.

MAGICIAN

I started giving away every coin I earned. I'd keep the small coins and the paper money, but that particular coin had to go. It just so happened that I could exchange it for a stage show or two during some particularly miserable weeks.

CLOWN steps down and performs.

CLOWN

My name is Dip-Dap-Flip-Flap-Mish-Mash-Whip-Lash the haberdasher Clown. I've got needles and thimbles and ribbons and cake! I've got buttons and zippers and whiskers – they're fake!

CLOWN rips moustache off.

CLOWN

Pipe down! Pipe down! I've been paid to impress you! Not to dress or caress you – although I should wave to the lady in the back. Hello!

CLOWN inflates balloon.

CLOWN

The cake is the in the back – but look at this: I’ve made a candle. No? Not impressed. How about a unicorn? Ever seen one of those before? They’re real. Watch.

CLOWN puts unmodified baloon to his forehead.

MAGICIAN

As I watched the clown over the weeks, I knew I’d found a like-spirit.

Returning to a different CLOWN performance.

CLOWN

Do have any idea how much I get paid for this? Let me make you a little diagram. Let’s say this...

CLOWN holds up the unmodified balloon.

CLOWN

...this is all the money your father brings home on a regular basis from his job fleecing hard working people like me.

CLOWN begins to make a poodle.

CLOWN

The nose here – maybe – goes to taxes. If he’s not working the system with his accountant friends – he *is* an accountant? – Okay. Sure. This poodle doesn’t have a nose. This is the first time I’ve ever had something in common with the government: neither of us get a piece!

MAGICIAN

It was like watching a teacher with too much rouge and unwieldy hair teach a lesson about the world with balloons.

CLOWN

No! I will not leave quietly! I came here to entertain the children!

MAGICIAN turns to CLOWN.

MAGICIAN

I want to learn from you.

CLOWN

What?

MAGICIAN

I want to learn from you. I'm a magician. I like your style.

CLOWN

A magician... I've never liked magicians. You can never tell if they're swindling you or saving you; whether it's a trick or a trap. They're a tainted bunch.

MAGICIAN

I stopped performing because I thought the same thing until I saw your act. You're educating with balloons. I want to do that with magic.

CLOWN

Teach people with magic?

MAGICIAN

Yes. Teach them.

CLOWN

About what?

MAGICIAN

The traps.

CLOWN begins droning. Backs away next to FATHER. They drone.

MAGICIAN

So the clown started training me. Taught me how to take my frustrations with the idea of magic being used to fleece and turn that into an act that demonstrated the power of magic to awe and inspire. I did mock séances –

CLOWN jangles a tambourine.

MAGICIAN

– exposing the fallacy of communicating with the dead. The tricks that are played on a unsuspecting victims, empathetic hearts, and damaged souls.

CLOWN and FATHER stop droning. They exit.

MAGICIAN

The dead can't speak. I never knew what happened to that clown. I never saw him again. I suspect he was making poodle diagrams of economic realities at some birthday party somewhere.

Enter CLOWN in a bright light behind MAGICIAN. CLOWN begins removing clothing, makeup, etc.

MAGICIAN

The clown was suspicious of magicians. Thought that they tainted everything. I used to think that too. And then we met on a fluke. The right price at the right time. At the end he told me that –

CLOWN

Magic is so much more than that.

MAGICIAN

– and I knew he was right. Magic was something special.

It is clear that FATHER was dressed as CLOWN. FATHER begins droning.

MAGICIAN

I was going to spend the rest of my life –

Droning stops.

MAGICIAN

– proving it.

END OF PLAY

Mactivist 4.3

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MAGICIAN

Dressed as a bygone U.S. President.

BARTENDER

Dressed as a female anime character.

Sources:

A great selection of the MAGICIAN's lines were pulled directly from Theodore Roosevelt's 1901 *State of the Union* address via the website below: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29542>

MAGICIAN onstage alone. A speech. Somber.

MAGICIAN

The Congress assembles this year under the shadow of a great calamity. President McKinley was shot by an anarchist. A man of moderate means, a man whose stock sprang from the sturdy tillers of the soil, who had himself belonged among the wage-workers... the Judas-like infamy of this act. There is no baser deed in all the annals of crime. His crime should be made an offense against the law of nations, like piracy and that form of man-stealing known as the slave trade; for it is of far blacker infamy than either. The American people are slow to wrath, but when their wrath is once kindled it burns like a consuming flame.

BARTENDER

Hi! Would you like a drink?

MAGICIAN

No law can guard us against the consequences of our own folly.

BARTENDER

You're funny!

MAGICIAN

The men who are idle or credulous, the men who seek gains not by genuine work with head or hand but by gambling in any form, are always a source of menace not only to themselves but to others.

BARTENDER

I didn't ask you about gambling, silly, I asked you about a drink. How about it? Can I pour you one?

MAGICIAN

The old laws, and the old customs which had almost the binding force of law, were once quite sufficient to regulate the accumulation and distribution of wealth.

BARTENDER

What are you going on about. Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! La la la! Like a helicopter! See. Watch my fly!

BARTENDER extends arms like a plane and runs about the room.

BARTENDER

Quit talking so much! What are you doing in a bar if you're not here to drink?

MAGICIAN

To drown my sorrows, good sir, in the presence of souls more unfortunate than I.

BARTENDER

Well, I don't think you'll find anyone like that here: Just me! And I don't like anything to do with drowning! Whee!

BARTENDER flies around for another pass.

MAGICIAN

The captains of industry who have driven the railway systems across this continent, who have built up our commerce, who have developed our manufactures, have on the whole done great good to our people.

BARTENDER

That's not what my customers say, and they build the railways. Tee-hee!

MAGICIAN

The slightest study of business conditions will satisfy anyone capable of forming a judgment.

BARTENDER

Are you calling them incapable of forming a judgement. That seems mean. Are you a mean man?

MAGICIAN slams money on the bar.

MAGICIAN

The products of irrigation will be consumed chiefly in upbuilding local centers.

MAGICIAN pats his stomach.

BARTENDER

So you will drink! Yumee!!! What would you like? Drowning sorrows can take a long time or a little.

MAGICIAN

The necessary foundation has already been laid.

BARTENDER

How am I supposed to know if you ate anything? You don't seem that sad to me. Is that what you mean by "necessary foundation?" What would you like?

MAGICIAN

It would be unwise to begin by doing too much, for a great deal will doubtless be learned, both as to what can and what cannot be safely attempted, by the early efforts, which must of necessity be partly experimental in character.

BARTENDER

Ooooookay! What's your poison then. I'll make it small – I promise!

MAGICIAN

No reservoir or canal should ever be built to satisfy selfish personal or local interests; but only in accordance with the advice of trained experts.

BARTENDER

You like like a beer man to me! This is what my grandfather drank all day long. And don't worry – I'm an expert in the ways of spirits. You could even call me a conjuror! Whoa! Spooky! Are you scared? So, one more time, what are you sad about.

MAGICIAN

I'm an ex-magician and I've given up on life. Please refrain from speaking of conjurors in communion with the devil in my presense.

BARTENDER

I love magic! All the flashing lights! The sparkling costumes! The pretty girls and the amazing tricks! Show me show me show me! Please please please please please!

MAGICIAN

There should be no extravagance.

BARTENDER

What's wrong with extravagance?

MAGICIAN

Magic should be, always, free from the least taint of excessive or reckless expenditure.

BARTENDER

Well it doesn't get any less "recklessly expenditure'd" than right here at the *Clown Dive*. Can you show me one of your little tricks? Hmmm? Can you? I'd really like to see one. What do you need?

MAGICIAN

We are not at the starting point of this development.

BARTENDER

Right. Here's your very small beer – wouldn't want you to attempt to much in one go.

MAGICIAN

A high degree of enterprise and ability has been shown in the work itself; but as much cannot be said in reference to the laws relating thereto.

BARTENDER

You got busted, huh? What happened? Drowning your sorrows is the best thing you can do! Did you cut a lady in half? Is that what happened? Leave someone in a box for too long. Oh! Did something go awry with fire? Swords!? Silver rings!?

MAGICIAN

With a few creditable exceptions.

BARTENDER

I like this game.

MAGICIAN

Many streams have already passed into private ownership, or a control equivalent to ownership.

BARTENDER

I knew you could take more than you said!

BARTENDER winks at MAGICIAN while pouring another drink.

BARTENDER

You're like a great big teddy bear!

MAGICIAN

Whoever controls a stream practically controls the land it renders productive.

BARTENDER

You wanna be productive, teddy bear, then go on and show me a trick! I've been very patient you know.

MAGICIAN

To grow up in the arid regions...

BARTENDER

How did you know? That's right! Right outside the desert. Is this one of those – what do you call it – mentalism!?! You really are great!

MAGICIAN simply stares at his drink.

MAGICIAN

Reforms can only be final and satisfactory when they come through the enlightenment of the people most concerned.

BARTENDER

What you're doing right here is the best path to enlightenment! You've certainly come to the right place.

MAGICIAN

Nothing could be more unwise than for isolated communities to continue to learn everything experimentally, instead of profiting by what is already known elsewhere.

BARTENDER

I'm a fan of sharing too. You know, we had another magician in here once. Sad fellow. Dressed like a clown. I guess he was supposed to do funny magic, but when he took on "many streams" he didn't really reach the enlightenment he'd hoped for. Sad story. I wonder what ever happened to him? That's life, anyway. That's what this job is. I try to see the positive in it. Anyway I could see a trick already? I'm just dying to see one. I've been in here all alone since long before sunset.

MAGICIAN

We are dealing with a new and momentous question, in the pregnant years while institutions are forming, and what we do will affect not only the present but future generations.

BARTENDER

Gosh you're smart! I want to be just like you when I get out of here. Not really interested in the "pregnant years" though, whatever that means. (*Pause.*) Maybe the clown was having pregnant years.

MAGICIAN

Our aim should be not simply to reclaim... but avail ourselves of the best experience of the time.

BARTENDER

I like having fun too! (*Pause.*) Hey! You know what would be fun? Magic tricks!

MAGICIAN

As I said before, I've given it up. I'm simply making ammends for my former life as a peddler of falsehood before dispossessing myself of this rather unfortunate exterior of humanity over the side of the bridge.

BARTENDER

Don't do that! Magic is a special – very special – talent that shouldn't be wasted on bridges or water.

BARTENDER slaps the drink away from MAGICIAN.

BARTENDER

I've got a new and momentous question.

MAGICIAN

Our earnest effort is to help these people upward along the stony and difficult path that leads to self-government.

BARTENDER

Well you're doing a pretty bad job of self-governing if I do say so myself. And I do! One trick. Here's a coin. Do something with it – and nothing flashy!

MAGICIAN

Already a greater measure of material prosperity...

MAGICIAN hands back a ten dollar bill.

MAGICIAN

...has been attained.

BARTENDER

Wow!

MAGICIAN

It is no light task.

BARTENDER

I can tell! You made money! Again! Again!

MAGICIAN

For more than a thousand years they have been slowly fitting themselves, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, toward this end.

BARTENDER

I told you to stop talking like that! You're not jumping off of any bridges unless you end up standing on the shore while people applaud your efforts!

MAGICIAN

We must show both patience and strength, forbearance and steadfast resolution. Our aim is high.

BARTENDER

Your aim is low! Far too low!

MAGICIAN

Such desertion of duty on our part would be a crime against humanity.

BARTENDER

You're acting like a dummy! Listen to me when I say this: jumping off of a bridge is a crime against humanity! You're very talented.

MAGICIAN

No competent observer, sincerely desirous of finding out the facts and influenced only by a desire for the welfare of...

BARTENDER

I've got a magic trick!

MAGICIAN looks up for a moment but is clocked with a large, heavy blunt object with a blackout. We hear mumbling. Lights up. MAGICIAN is waking up. Bartender is rousing a group of children to applause.

BARTENDER

Here he is – the great big Magical Teddy Bear!

MAGICIAN

– the very verge of safety –

BARTENDER

They've come for you! Show them your tricks.

MAGICIAN

– extremely anxious –

BARTENDER

Here's another coin! Go on!

MAGICIAN regains his composure and transforms the coin into a ten dollar bill to smiles, awes and applause.

BARTENDER

Yay!

MAGICIAN

It relieves us of a great burden...

The MAGICIAN smiles.

MAGICIAN

The true end of every great and free people should be self-respecting peace.

BARTENDER

So you're not going to "dispossess" yourself?

MAGICIAN

No. Not when I have my duties. Magic, being merely a most regrettable but necessary duty which must be performed for the sake of the welfare of mankind. Children, can you hear them? Can you hear the bells? The singing? The joy? Perhaps the most characteristic educational movement of the past fifty years is that which has created the modern public library and developed it into broad and active service. There are now over five thousand public libraries in the United States, the product of this period. I will amaze you once more if you promise me one thing and one thing only – visit your public libraries and read. It is a trade you see? You read and I amaze, only in time you will find that reading is the better form of amazement in that it brings you in contact with other minds in other places with other ideas and other insights. One last trick, before you go off to the library – Bartender... you are from an Arid region, yes?

BARTENDER

Yes.

Clapping. Happiness. Blackout.

END OF PLAY

Mactivist 4.4

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MAGICIAN

A magician.

BARTENDER

A bartender.

*MAGICIAN stands center stage. Long inhalation: loud. Looks nervous.
Slow motion. Gunshot. Blackout.*

The office of the BARTENDER.

BARTENDER

Your act sucks.

MAGICIAN

What are you talking about? They love the –

BARTENDER

They hate the rings.
Everyone knows how that one's done.

MAGICIAN

I'd like to see you –

BARTENDER

They're fake rings.

BARTENDER holds up some metal rings briefly.

MAGICIAN

No one is allowed in my magic trunk! I put a lock on there!

BARTENDER

And who bought the lock?
Listen, I think you're a nice kid
but you're not packing them in anymore
and when you're packing them in is when *nice* means something
see?
You've need a new act tonight.
wholly original
amazing!
or you're out of here.

MAGICIAN

But I'm already behind on –

BARTENDER

And you can't eat at the bar nomore.

MAGICIAN

I'll amaze you – tonight!

Blackout. Gunshot. Lights up. MAGICIAN, clearly struck in the stomach, is falling slowly, back arched, in slow motion. Blackout before the fall is half completed.

Lights up. Magician onstage. The “new act” is in full swing.

MAGICIAN

I'd like for everyone to think about water. Ah! Water. Rushing over your face. Your entire body.

AUDIENCE

I haven't had a shower in weeks!

General laughter.

MAGICIAN

I'm going to take this cup, fill it up with water, put this handkerchief over the top of it to keep the moisture inside –

AUDIENCE

There's *magic* happening!

MAGICIAN

And I'm going to –

MAGICIAN dumps the water glass over his head. Glitter, instead of water, comes out. He bows.

MAGICIAN

Thank you! Thank you!

AUDIENCE

You suck!

MAGICIAN

Okay. And now for a crowd favorite. I learned this while studying patience and understanding with monks who dwell in mountains, breath slowly, and manipulate metals better than scientists. From them I bring you –

MAGICIAN produces three metal rings.

MAGICIAN

The magic linking rings.

BARTENDER peeks onstage

BARTENDER

Get off the stage!

MAGICIAN

These are different than the rings I've shown you before. Their secrets are –

BARTENDER

Turn them off!

Lights go out. Gunshot. Slow motion. MAGICIAN continues falling.

Lights up. BARTENDER's office.

BARTENDER

What do you mean they're different?
They're the same thing.

MAGICIAN

The other rings were from different monastic communities.

BARTENDER

You've never been outside the county lines.

MAGICIAN

I certainly have.

BARTENDER pulls up a smartphone or GPS device.

BARTENDER

I tagged you with a tracker.

MAGICIAN

I hate needles.

BARTENDER

You were sleeping.

Listen:

You're through.

It's a rough gig.

Sorry.

MAGICIAN

What about my tricks?

BARTENDER

I paid for them.

Giving them to the next guy.

Get's in next week.

MAGICIAN

Who?

BARTENDER

Mystical Monty.
He works next door.
Does this amazing trick.
Here's a ticket.
Go see what real magic looks like.

BARTENDER reaches over and takes MAGICIAN's hat.

MAGICIAN

That's my hat.

BARTENDER

Get out of here.

Three or so chairs. MAGICIAN sits watching an act we don't see, but do hear.

MYSTICAL MONTY

Ha!

Flash of bright light.

MAGICIAN

Whoa!

MYSTICAL MONTY

Thank you! And now for the most dangerous trick. A mind-altering end to a most entertaining evening. This is not for the light of heart. Dear?

MAGICIAN

A gun?

MYSTICAL MONTY

Yes. A gun. Don't be alarmed. It will never be directed at any person in the audience. You are all, I assure you, safe.

MAGICIAN

What is he going to do with –

MYSTICAL MONTY

I, on the other hand.

Quick footsteps.

MYSTICAL MONTY

Dear?

Gunshot. Crowd sounds.

MYSTICAL MONTY

Aha!

Applause.

MAGICIAN

He caught it in his hand! Wow! Did you see that! He caught it in his hand!

Blackout. Gunshot. Slow motion. Magician continues the fall. Head is falling below waist. Blackout.

Lights up. Outdoors.

MAGICIAN

Mystical Monty! You were incredible.

MYSTICAL MONTY

I know.

MAGICIAN

How did you catch a bullet! That was amazing.

MYSTICAL MONTY

Well, when you study with the north-southeastern monks of the valley, of the precipice, on the sandy beaches – in complete silence for thirteen years – you learn a thing or two about modern warfare and the human body.

MAGICIAN

Wow!

MYSTICAL MONTY

A soldier of the West-eastern persuasion tried to shoot me and, instinctually – from years of silent contemplation – I caught the bullet with my bare hand. In reality I caught it with my mind.

MAGICIAN

Unbelievable.

MYSTICAL MONTY

I know. (*Laughs.*)

MAGICIAN

(*Laughs.*) (*Pause.*) So to find out just...

MYSTICAL MONTY

See how you respond to being shot.
It's the only way.
Farewell!

Blackout. Slow motion. Gunshot. MAGICIAN continues to fall. Head further down. Blackout.

BARTENDER's office.

MAGICIAN

I'm doing a trick tonight.

BARTENDER

Are you now?

MAGICIAN

Yeah.

BARTENDER

I don't think so.
I gave you the boot.
If you don't stay gone...

Magician pulls out the gun.

BARTENDER

Whoa!
Calm down!
You can go on.
Sure.

MAGICIAN

This is part of my act.

BARTENDER

You're gonna catch a bullet like Monty?

MAGICIAN

Yeah.

BARTENDER

Well how does he do it?
What's the secret?
Where does it come from?
It can't come from the gun.

MAGICIAN

I'm doing the trick tonight.

BARTENDER

Alright.

MAGICIAN

Alright.

Blackout. Gunshot. Slow motion. Magician continues to fall.

Lights up. MAGICIAN at the end of his act. People are booing.

MAGICIAN

The rings not magical enough for you?
The cups and balls not exciting enough?
Well how about this?

MAGICIAN pulls out a gun. Shocked silence. Blackout.

Silence. Different light. Magician, staring out at the audience.

MAGICIAN

Of course it's a real bullet. Here.

Lights flicker out and back on. Silence.

MAGICIAN

Aim it right here.

Lights flicker out and back on.

MAGICIAN

Of course it's safe.

Lights flicker out and back on.

MAGICIAN

Go.

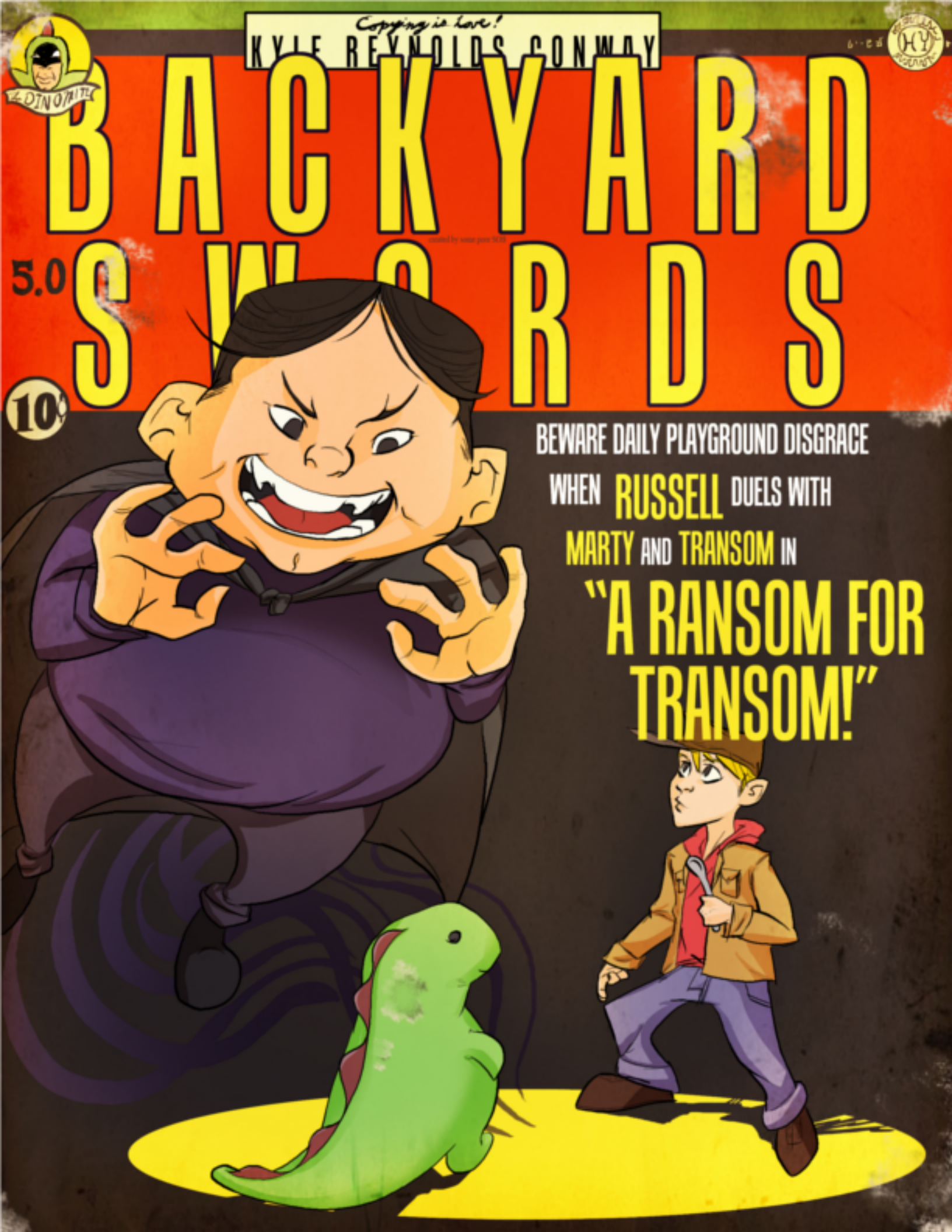
Gunshot. Magician falls. Exhalation: loud.

V.O. MAGICIAN

Did you ever wonder
why there isn't any wonder
anymore.
It all faded away.
All gone.
There's nothing worth living for.
Nothing to look forward too.
The future is dead.
Just like the present.
The children have it.
They look at the stars with wonder
awe
but for us it is gone.
It is done.
Nothing left.
Nothing remains but
the expected.
I used to be a magician.
I used to pretend to bring wonder.
But I only brought lies.
The greatest magic trick ever.
This is the greatest magic trick ever.

*Loud exhalation continues underneath. Blackout. Pause. Loud inhalation.
Lights flash bright.*

END OF PLAY



Copping is love!

KYLE REYNOLDS CONWAY



BACKYARD

SWORDS

5.0

10

BEWARE DAILY PLAYGROUND DISGRACE

WHEN **RUSSELL** DUELS WITH

MARTY AND **TRANSOM** IN

"A RANSOM FOR TRANSOM!"

Backyard Swords 5.0

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MARTY

A boy with a spoon.

RUSSELL

A bigger boy with a cape.

TRANSOM

A small, stuffed dinosaur.

HOLLY

A girl with a power.

MARTY talks to a small, stuffed dinosaur named TRANSOM while carrying a spoon as a sword.

MARTY

Transom, how come things are so hard? Do you have any idea how hard it is to go to school? No, I suppose you don't. Dinosaurs don't go to schools. You're lucky. You don't have to deal with bullies. You don't have to deal with Russell. Stepping on my neck every day with his big boots. I hate Russell so much. (*Pause.*) You want to fly? Okay. That's better than talking about Russell.

MARTY throws the TRANSOM doll off-stage.

MARTY

Come back! Come back!

Enter TRANSOM, a full-sized human in a dinosaur costume.

TRANSOM

I'm coming. I'm coming! My wings got stuck.

MARTY

You flew a really long way!

TRANSOM

Only because you're such a great thrower!

MARTY

Thanks.

TRANSOM

Back in the day a guy named Rex used to bully the kids in my school.

MARTY

You went to school.

TRANSOM

Uphill both ways. It was a long time ago. Just don't worry about it. After a while you'll figure out that he just isn't worth the time or consideration. Focus on the nice people.

MARTY

Like you.

TRANSOM

I'm glad you think so.

MARTY

Can you sit here for a minute while I go check in with my Mom?

TRANSOM

Sure.

TRANSOM the actor places TRANSOM the prop on a bench and waits. Whistling. Rocking back and forth, etc. Enter RUSSELL in goggles and black cape on tip toes. RUSSELL sneaks over to the bench and yanks the TRANSOM prop into his arms and escapes. TRANSOM the actor moves in parallel with the prop. Enter MARTY.

MARTY

Transom! My Mom said we could play for – Transom? Hey, where did you go? Transom?

MARTY looks at the ground.

MARTY

Oh no! Russell's big boots leave big footprints. Agh!

Blackout.

Lights up on RUSSELL standing maniacally and staring at the audience. TRANSOM, the actor (and the prop) sit behind in chains.

RUSSELL

I hate that Marty! He's always such a smarty! Pleasing the teachers – he sits in first row. From the back the board is blurry – and they say that I'm *slow*. So I pummell and pound him! I step on his face. A teacher's pet deserves daily playground disgrace.

TRANSOM

You're mean, Russell.

RUSSELL

It's true, but I have a plan. A ransom for Transom – he'll meet my demands! I'll buy love with the money, respect and some gold. I'll make friends and not enemies. Be warm and not cold. Perceptions will alter when they see me for me.

TRANSOM

It won't ever happen if you keep me locked up in this tree.

RUSSELL

It's a tower, be quiet. A fort and a fortress. From up here I'll plot Marty's demise.

Lights shift to Marty, elsewhere:

MARTY

Now I don't have anyone to talk to.

Enter HOLLY.

HOLLY

You can talk to me.

MARTY

I saw you the other day –

HOLLY

Under Russell's boot.

MARTY

Just like me.

HOLLY

You were under his right foot. That's worse.

MARTY

And you the left. I could see you through the tears.

HOLLY

Now is not the time to cry. Rejoice. Russell isn't in school today. We're free.

MARTY

Russell kidnapped my dinosaur, Transom. My Mom found this ransom note under the doormat this morning. It had a lock of Transom's hair attached to the "R" in "Ransom."

HOLLY

Time to fight back.

MARTY

I don't know.

HOLLY talks with her mind.

V.O. HOLLY

Do you really want your dinosaur friend to die?

MARTY

What?

V.O. HOLLY

I said, do you really want your dinosaur friend to die?

MARTY

Are you...

V.O. HOLLY

Quiet.

MARTY tries to speak, but cannot make a sound.

V.O. HOLLY

I have the power of my mind. And you have your sword.

HOLLY releases MARTY from silence.

MARTY

My what?

MARTY raises his arm to find that he is, indeed, holding a sword.

MARTY

Whoa.

HOLLY

Let's go.

MARTY

And rescue Transom.

HOLLY

All wrongs reversed.

MARTY

Okay. All wrongs reversed!

The exit.

Lights transition to RUSSELL and TRANSOM.

TRANSOM

I can't believe you cut my hair.

RUSSELL

It's just hair! Calm down! Now he knows I'm serious! That I won't mess around!

TRANSOM

The hair that we're born with is the only hair that we've got.

RUSSELL

Please! Quiet! I've have mischief to plot! I'll concoct it especially for Marty, my friend. Only in tears can this battle end. I'll send armies of vermin! Skunks, locusts and frogs! Armadillos with antlers! Horses with hogs! They'll "nay" and they'll "oink." They'll stink and they'll "croak!" Try laughing now, Marty! This isn't a joke! By the end of this battle – it could take us years – one of us, just one of us, will end up in tears!

TRANSOM

You don't have armadillos with antlers.

RUSSELL

Don't I?

An armadillo with antlers crosses the stage while RUSSELL laughs. TRANSOM's head lowers.

Lights transition to HOLLY and MARTY hacking their way through the darkness. The sound of locusts and frogs can be heard.

MARTY

What's that smell.

HOLLY

I think it's a skunk.

MARTY

That's so gross.

HOLLY

You want Transom back, don't you?

MARTY

I'd do anything for my friend.

V.O. HOLLY

Watch out!

MARTY

What was that!

HOLLY

A locust.

MARTY

What do I do?

V.O. HOLLY

On your right. Now!

MARTY swings right. A locust dies.

MARTY

Whoa.

HOLLY

Russell.

MARTY

How do you know?

HOLLY

Look at the footprint it left behind.

MARTY

Russell. What's he trying to do?

HOLLY

He wants to hurt you, and your friend.

MARTY

Well we're not going to let that happen.

HOLLY

No. We're not.

The sound of an armadillo with antlers.

MARTY

What was that?

HOLLY

New creature combination: Armadillo with antlers.

MARTY closes his eyes.

MARTY

Tell me where to swing my sword.

V.O. HOLLY

It's moving so fast.

They dodge attacks a couple of times.

V.O. HOLLY

In front of you! Now!

MARTY strikes down and slays the antlered armadillo.

HOLLY

Great work. Just look at it.

MARTY

He's some sort of crazy scientist.

HOLLY

Camera and GPS. See?

MARTY

He knows we're coming.

Lights shift to RUSSELL and TRANSOM.

RUSSELL

He's just outside! No!

TRANSOM

You'll never defeat Marty.

RUSSELL

I've got one more trick up my sleeve.

RUSSELL pulls out a large pair of boots and puts them on.

RUSSELL

Or on my feet anyway. I'll crush both of their tiny little heads!

Enter MARTY and HOLLY.

HOLLY

Watch out for his boots.

TRANSOM

Marty!

MARTY

Hello, Russell. I've come to stop you.

RUSSELL

This can only end in tears.

MARTY

This will end in victory.

RUSSELL

Brought your friend along, I see. I'll crush you both. Have you seen my new shoes?

V.O. HOLLY

Step right.

MARTY steps out of the way, narrowly missing RUSSELL's kick.

RUSSELL

You've brought your "A" game again, I see. But grades won't help you here.

MARTY

Why are you so mean!

V.O. HOLLY

Left, quickly!

MARTY avoids another kick.

RUSSELL

Why are you so nice to everyone.

MARTY

I'd be nice to you too if you'd keep your feet off of my head.

RUSSELL

Think fast!

V.O. HOLLY

He's – !

RUSSELL knocks down HOLLY and puts a boot on her head.

MARTY

No!

TRANSOM

You can do it, Marty!

MARTY

I can do this!

Lights flash. TRANSOM, the actor, is replaced by TRANSOM the prop. The sword becomes a spoon. It is the playground again.

MARTY

Stop it, Russell. You're being mean.

HOLLY

And what are you going to do about it?

MARTY

I'm going to give you a hug.

MARTY goes towards RUSSELL for a hug.

RUSSELL

Maybe... I don't want a hug. Maybe I don't want one.

MARTY

You're hurting Holly.

HOLLY

Ouch.

RUSSELL

Well...

MARTY hugs RUSSELL. HOLLY gets off of the ground.

HOLLY

What are you doing?

RUSSELL

I'm sorry. Everyone likes you and they call me slow.

HOLLY

You're very fast.

MARTY

How else could you get two people's heads under your feet?

RUSSELL

You can have your dinosaur back now. I'm sorry.

MARTY

Thank's Russell. Wanna sit next to us tomorrow?

HOLLY

Marty!

RUSSELL

In the front?

MARTY

Yeah.

RUSSELL

Sure.

HOLLY

Yeah, Russell, you can sit with us. Just don't...

RUSSELL

I won't.

HOLLY

Okay.

MARTY

Okay.

MARTY picks up TRANSOM and his spoon. Smile.

END OF PLAY

Backyard Swords 5.1

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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Dramatis Personae

MARTY

A boy with a spoon.

RUSTELLA

A small girl with a cape.

TRANSOM

A small, stuffed dinosaur.

HOLLY

A girl with a power.

MARTY, holding a spoon and a small stuffed dinosaur, stares at the ground rotating from right to left.

MARTY

This is the part of the day I like the best, Transom. Even though we're on our way home from school, and that doesn't take very long, it's so much better than being around Rustella. She's so mean! I didn't use to be afraid of anything, especially girls that are so short, but she gets on everyone's nerves. (*Pause.*) You're right. I should stop talking about her. You're going to be a hit at show and tell tomorrow! And anyway, this is the best part of the day. The part where we are lifted up on wings! When anything is possible. When dinosaurs like you can fly!

MARTY throws the doll offstage.

MARTY

Wow! You really flew far this time!

Enter TRANSOM, in actor form, carrying the doll and dusting himself off.

TRANSOM

Only because I didn't put on my landing gear! I haven't flown since yesterday. Things are a little rusty.

MARTY

Don't use that word. But you flew so far!

TRANSOM

Thank you, Marty! The next time I consider flying I might just need a co-pilot. Might a certain buddy of mine be up for the job?

MARTY

You know it!

TRANSOM

Tailspin!

TRANSOM turns in a circle, giving MARTY a high-five with his tail.

MARTY

You're my best friend, Transom.

TRANSOM

I consider it an honor. You are also my best friend.

MARTY

What could be wrong? You just flew! And you're hanging out with your best friend!

MARTY holds a hand aloft for a tailspin to no avail.

TRANSOM

I saw what happened on the playground today.

MARTY

Oh.

TRANSOM

Rustella is really mean. Her boots are some kind of weapon surely, as I can't believe that someone of her size and stature requires such large footwear.

MARTY

You saw that, huh?

TRANSOM

You mean her foot smashing your face into the playground? Yes. It looked painful.

MARTY

It was! Oh! It was so painful, Transom!

TRANSOM

And that other girl –

MARTY

What other girl?

TRANSOM

Under her other boot.

MARTY

Holly. Yeah. Rustella thinks that Holly is too tall.

TRANSOM

Rustella has issues. I think she needs a friend.

MARTY

She doesn't *want* any friends.

TRANSOM

Everyone wants friends. You know, when I was in school –

MARTY

Dinosaurs had schools?

TRANSOM

– of course we did! You can learn all about it via a historical documentary on VHS! I'm surprised. What kind of education are you getting these days? A dino named Rex used to terrorize our playground.

MARTY

What did you do?

TRANSOM

Nothing! Oh, we were so afraid and he was so mean. No one wanted to talk to him at all. He had more of a biting problem than a stomping problem, but it amounted to pain all the same.

MARTY

He bit you?

TRANSOM

Oh, yeah. I mean one time I was just covered in blood – I mean there was a trail of it from the playground to my doorstep – absolutely covered in –

MARTY

That's kinda gross.

TRANSOM

Are you okay?

MARTY

Thinking about bl... uh, it makes me a little light headed is all.

TRANSOM

Well, he was our bully and it turned out he just needed a friend.

MARTY

Really?

TRANSOM

He didn't have a great home life. What do you know about Rustella?

MARTY

That she hates people.

TRANSOM

Well I could have told you that.

MARTY looking out at audience. TRANSOM and doll behind. During this monologue Rustella, in cape and goggles, steals TRANSOMs.

MARTY

I don't know. I mean, she's a really tiny girl – no taller than this – and she's got pigtails, prefers pink, and wears glasses. You can hear her coming from a mile away because of the big boots she always wears. It doesn't matter – hallways, grassy fields,

snow-covered meadows, or concrete sidewalks – you can always hear her coming. But she’s so fast. Boot to head speed has to be under a second. Pain: unbearable. I mean

–

MARTY turns around.

MARTY

Transom? Hey Transom! Where’d you fly off to friend?

MARTY kneels down and touches the ground.

MARTY

Footprints. Oh no! Rustella! What am I gonna do for show and tell!

BLACKOUT.

RUSTELLA standing in front of a chained up TRANSOM and doll.

RUSTELLA

Haha! Ha! Ha! Hahaha! Hahahahaha! Marty has felt the sting of these boots but taking you, his dinosaur friend, will be the stake in his heart! The tumor in his brain! The... deep cut in his throat! The wart... inoperable and deadly... on his foot!

TRANSOM

You are so evil.

RUSTELLA

Bullies aren’t evil. He’ll learn about failure. Bullies are reality. We are a wakeup call for the rest of the sorry losers to get their acts together. We’re preparation for the real world. We give free education to those who need it most.

TRANSOM

You’re evil, plain and simple.

RUSTELLA

Would an evil princess give so much of herself? And for free? I think not! I'm a part of the system – one of the many applications on your mobile digital device – you can't live without me.

TRANSOM

You're a virus.

RUSTELLA

Have you ever seen a virus? They're quite beautiful close up. Like art. Microscopes are required to see my beauty. Only those who look close enough can truly see.

TRANSOM

I'm pretty close up.

RUSTELLA

And?

TRANSOM

You just look sad.

RUSTELLA

Enough!

RUSTELLA attacks TRANSOM. BLACKOUT.

MARTY kicking the ground aimlessly onstage and swinging his spoon like a sword. Enter HOLLY.

HOLLY

What are you doing over there?

MARTY

Mourning my life. Contemplating unhappiness.

HOLLY

What's wrong? Hey! Rustella isn't even in school today. Want to play on the swings?

MARTY

Rustella isn't in school because she stole my dinosaur.

HOLLY

Your dinosaur.

MARTY

Transom. He's always with me. I was going to bring him for show and tell tomorrow.

HOLLY

Oh, yeah: *that*.

MARTY

What?

HOLLY

Rustella calls it your dolly.

MARTY

Well she calls you a tally.

HOLLY

Fine!

MARTY

Wait! Wait! I'm sorry. Come back. I'm just not feeling well.

HOLLY

I'm sorry you're not feeling well. That's no excuse though.

MARTY

It isn't.

A change occurs. HOLLY speaks with her mind.

V.O. HOLLY

Then let's go rescue your dinosaur.

MARTY

What?

V.O. HOLLY

Raise your sword and lead the way.

MARTY

My sword?

MARTY raises his spoon. It has changed into a sword.

MARTY

Whoa.

HOLLY

Are you ready?

MARTY

Were you just talking with your mind?

HOLLY

Quickly, there isn't much time. The science fair is tomorrow.

They exit. The sound of a crow.

RUSTELLA peering over a sleeping TRANSOM. She wakes TRANSOM with a kick to the ribs.

TRANSOM

Ow!

RUSTELLA

Hahaha! Ha! Haha! Ha!

TRANSOM

You're so mean, but Marty will rescue me.

RUSTELLA

Marty? Please! Don't make me laugh again. Hahaha! Ha! Ha!

TRANSOM

That's what best friends do. Don't you have any friends?

RUSTELLA

Of course I do!

Enter a pony with the head of a lion.

TRANSOM

What is that?

RUSTELLA

A plion! Pony body, lion head. Deadly.

TRANSOM

You're an evil scientist!

RUSTELLA

What will Ms. Montgomery say about my "F" in biological science now? Tomorrow would be my day in the sun if I cared about school!

TRANSOM

Clearly you should have recieved an "A." That's plain to see.

RUSTELLA

I'm sure she'll come around once she meets my plion!

TRANSOM

Perhaps it should be called a ponion. I mean, there is far more pony than lion in your current design.

RUSTELLA

The pony parts are simply there to lure unsuspecting morons into the lion's mouth. How do you not get this? "Ponion?" Please. That's about as scary as an onion.

TRANSOM

Who tells puns. (*Pause.*) Get it?

RUSTELLA

Oh, I get it all right. I get it. But you get this: Marty's head will be the feast for my plion! And you – you Transom – will cry like an onion!

TRANSOM

Can I at least have a knife to cut the onion?

RUSTELLA

What?

TRANSOM

Onions make you cry when you cut them. I don't know why, but I won't cry unless I have a knife to cut them.

RUSTELLA

Unstable sulfur when you cut through the onion, mixing the – I know all about it dragon.

TRANSOM

Dinosaur.

RUSTELLA

Whatever. I'm talking about you crying when I rid the world of Marty.

TRANSOM

Oh. (*Pause.*) Well could I have a knife anyway? For the onion.

RUSTELLA

Sure. After I send my plion's to get Marty! Away!

Blackout. The sound of hundreds of plions galloping/roaring through the darkness. An owl.

Moonlight. Marty and Holly in the woods. Branches break underfoot.

MARTY

What's that?

HOLLY

Just an owl.

MARTY

Sure sounded scary.

A MOWL – man body/owl head – walks into view from behind.

V.O. HOLLY

Behind you.

MARTY

What?

Mowl hoots, loudly, and attacks.

MARTY

What the – what is that?

V.O. HOLLY

It's saying it's "Mowl."

MARTY

What do I –

V.O. HOLLY

Swing left!

MARTY does. The MOWL expires.

MARTY

Where did that come from?

HOLLY

Rustella.

MARTY

She got an “F” in our science class.

HOLLY

She always said she didn’t deserve it. Maybe –

MARTY

She’s trying to kill us.

HOLLY

You want to turn back now? She still has Transom.

MARTY

No, I just –

HOLLY

Don’t be afraid.

MARTY

This is something out of a scary book without pictures. You know, the ones that –

HOLLY

I know. Why are you sitting down.

MARTY

I'm tired and scared.

HOLLY

Of what? The dark? A human body with an owl head?

MARTY

Failing.

HOLLY

Well you'll surely fail if you just sit there.

MARTY

Yeah, but –

HOLLY

Get up! Put in the effort. Do your best. Save your friend! That's what you've got to do Marty. That's the only option you have. If you fail, then fail big.

MARTY

You're intimidating.

HOLLY

Better than being –

A PLION roars in the distance.

MARTY

A lion?

HOLLY

Another experiment of Rustella's. Over here, quick, I see a door.

*Sound of a door opening. Lights up on RUSTELLA and TRANSOM.
RUSTELLA gives TRANSOM an onion and a knife.*

RUSTELLA

Did you hear that?

TRANSOM

What?

RUSTELLA

They made it to the castle. My Mowl! No! It must be dead. I was going to show that teacher a thing or two at the science fair. Oh! I'm so mad!

TRANSOM

I told you Marty would rescue me.

RUSTELLA

Why don't you just cut your onion and cry!

A door opens. MARTY and HOLLY enter.

MARTY

Rustella!

RUSTELLA

Marty!

HOLLY

Rustella!

RUSTELLA

Holly?

TRANSOM, using the knife to free himself, arises quickly.

TRANSOM

Rustella!

RUSTELLA

Transom! How did you get out.

TRANSOM

I used the knife as a method of escape instead of a stepping stone towards tears.

RUSTELLA

Plion! Where's my plion?

HOLLY

Lying safely outside.

MARTY

Tied to a tree.

RUSTELLA

No! This isn't how it's supposed to go! I hate you, Marty! I hate you too, Holly! I'm indifferent about the dinosaur.

TRANSOM

I'm touched.

RUSTELLA

But the two of you have ruined my life.

TRANSOM whispers into Marty's ear.

HOLLY

You've ruined our lives! Do you know how much work it took fix my hair after you stepped on my head every day?

RUSTELLA

Well I was sick of looking up at everyone!

MARTY

Hey. Hey, Rustella. Hey, how'd you make the plion?

RUSTELLA

Leave me alone.

MARTY

Transom was just telling me about it. Transom really liked it. How did you do it? It's amazing. Are you going to bring it to the science fair?

RUSTELLA

I don't know. I was thinking about it I guess.

MARTY

You really should.

HOLLY

Marty!

MARTY

Shh! I'm sorry we hurt your Mowl.

RUSTELLA

Can't blame you really. I sent it to kill you.

MARTY

Yeah! Ha! Um... that wasn't so cool.

RUSTELLA

Sorry about that. It's just –

MARTY

Let's bring your plion to the science fair.

HOLLY

Marty!

MARTY

And you can sit with Holly and Me –

TRANSOM

And me!

MARTY

And Transom at lunch tomorrow.

RUSTELLA

You mean it?

RUSTELLA stands up. TRANSOM returns to a stuffed animal. The sword to a spoon.

RUSTELLA

I don't have any friends.

HOLLY

That's because you tried to kill us.

RUSTELLA

I'm sorry.

MARTY

Here's your plion.

MARTY pulls a leash. A cat in a costume is on the other end.

HOLLY

That really will be great for show and tell.

RUSTELLA

Thanks. She's not that dangerous.

MARTY

We know.

Blackout. Scary cat shriek.

END OF PLAY

Backyard Swords 5.2

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

MARTY

A boy with a spoon.

RUSTY

A large bully with a cape.

TRANSOM

A small, stuffed dinosaur.

HOLLY

A girl with a power.

At rise five characters stand behind five chairs going from left to right across the stage. They remain there throughout the play. All props are either pantomimed or done with one of the chairs. MARTY comes downstage.

MARTY

What a terrible day! Can you believe how terrible it is? At least it's over. I'm on my way home now with my trusty friend Transom. He's a lovable dinosaur. He keeps me company when I'm down and not feeling well. I suppose all of you are making fun of me, huh? Whispering to each other about me being a big *nerd*! Well, I know you all have a special friend of your own you turn to in times of trouble. You don't tell anyone about your friend but they keep you safe when the night light is off... and maybe even when it's on. Well my friend is Transom, the lovable dinosaur. And Transom likes to fly!

MARTY throws the imaginary Transom offstage. TRANSOM the actor enters from behind the chairs.

MARTY

Transom! Come back!

TRANSOM

Hello, Marty!

MARTY

Why the sad look? You flew farther than I've ever seen anyone fly!

TRANSOM

Your terrible day, Marty. I saw what happened. I saw Rusty with his big boot –

MARTY

– I don't want to talk about it!

TRANSOM

Well, you've got to talk about it.

MARTY

Well I don't want to.

TRANSOM

It's got to stop, Marty. You've got to tell someone.

MARTY

I'm embarrassed.

TRANSOM

I understand, but it's only going to get worse. He had his foot on your head today – pushing your head into the ground – and that other girl too –

MARTY

Holly.

TRANSOM

It's about more than you now. You can't let –

MARTY

– Don't say his name! –

TRANSOM

Rusty! Rusty! Rusty! You can't let Rusty – literally – walk all over you and others. The first step is talking about it.

MARTY

To who?

TRANSOM

Your parents. Your teachers –

MARTY

I'll talk to you, okay?

TRANSOM

That's a start.

MARTY

Well that's the only start you're gonna get. It's embarrassing, Transom.

TRANSOM

You don't think I've been embarrassed? All the time. That's what happened to me in the cretaceous period.

MARTY

Whatever. You're so much older than me.

TRANSOM

Finish your yogurt?

MARTY

Yeah.

TRANSOM

Well then: get to talking.

MARTY

What am I supposed to say?

TRANSOM

You're not *supposed* to say anything. You're just supposed to talk.

MARTY walks downstage. Spotlight. Solo. TRANSOM is lit as a silhouette.

MARTY

Well, it all started when I was three.

The following is done in silhouette. Puppets? People? Projection? You decide. TRANSOM remains clearly separated from these visual depictions.

MARTY

Minding my own business on the playground. It was the first day I had you, Transom. Mom and just gotten you for me. I loved you. I loved you so much. We'd just moved to town – a long way – and I was just happy to see a playground again. I didn't want to play though because I had you. It didn't matter though. Marty already had his sights on me for one reason or another. But I couldn't have my sights on him at all.

The sound and visual of sand flying into our hero's face. The dumbshow goes black. The real TRANSOM silhouette now has a guest silhouette creeping slowly towards him: RUSSELL.

MARTY

Then, when I was eight – RUSSELL was bigger than me – he came up behind me and put a frog down my back. Was it funny? I guess it was. I danced and giggled – because it was tickling me – but at the end of the day it wouldn't have been anything to fuss about except, well, Russell knew I was allergic to frogs. I blew up like a balloon and had to be rushed to the emergency room. Apparently I even died, technically, but my Mom says I'm “a fighter.”

The dumbshow goes dark again. RUSSELL, in the darkness, steals the real TRANSOM silhouette and they disappear. MARTY continues telling stories. Lights to normal.

MARTY

And then, you know – today! – Russell had Holly and me under his big boots, in tears, crying and trying not to eat the dirt beneath his shoes. You know, I've never understood why he's so mean. I just don't get it at all. You've always been the one to console me: every time. Without fail. I'm so glad that you're my friend, Transom.

MARTY turns around. TRANSOM is gone.

MARTY

Transom? Hey Transom! Where did you go you big goof! What's that smell? Footprints! They're so big. They're so... Russell! No!

Sound of lightening takes us into and out of black. We return to RUSSELL's dungeon. Transom is held captive by a clever arrangement of chairs and the imagination.

TRANSOM

Let me free!

RUSSELL

Free? What's that? Why so snooty? And dear me, such dry skin. What's wrong, Transom? The dungeon life doesn't suit your fragile frame? Please. These accommodations are practically modern.

TRANSOM

You'll never get what you want!

RUSSELL

That rather depends on what I want, doesn't it? Or, rather, what you *imagine* that I want. Isn't that right? Doesn't that carry more meaning? Oh! I've just worked my thoughts into a knot. Do help me get them out.

TRANSOM

Untie me!

RUSSELL

Not the greatest transition, Dino, but it will do. How's this: "No." Too quaint. Too short. Aha! Did you actually think I'd let you go without something in return.

TRANSOM

Just what do you want?

RUSSELL

A ransom for Transom. It's got a ring to it, doesn't it? Don't you think. It rhymes, and as much as I *hate* rhyming it seems rather appropriate. Renumeration for years of abuse at the hands of that horrid Marty.

TRANSOM

Marty never did anything to you. It was all you! He's told me the stories. I was even there!

RUSSELL

Dear me. We will have our hands full with you, won't we? Well, the shackles remain then. I was hoping we could chat as equals over tea. Perhaps play a game of chess if you could approximate an opposable thumb out of one or your fingers to move the pieces. All of that, however, assumes that you have the brain power to play the game. I'm not judging! No no! But, you know, you let extinction get the best of you and your friends. I'd have at least had the courtesy to *try to live*. But, to each their own. It's the modern age, right?

TRANSOM

You're evil! Let me go!

RUSSELL

Ha ha! Oh no!

Blackout. The sound of swings creaking in the breeze. We rise to see HOLLY and MARTY sitting on chairs "swinging."

HOLLY

My face hurts, Marty.

MARTY

Mine too.

HOLLY

I don't want to do anything.

MARTY

We've got to. He stole my dinosaur.

HOLLY

I'm kind of scared of Russell. Aren't you?

MARTY

Yeah. I'm really scared of him.

HOLLY

It was just a doll after all.

MARTY

A doll? That doll – Transom – Transom got me through so many rough times. Without Transom... I don't even know.

A change of immense importance.

HOLLY

So are you ready to slay the mighty Russell?

MARTY

What?

HOLLY

Are you ready to raise your mighty sword and smite the evil overlord? Reclaim your dinosaur?

MARTY

My mighty sword?

MARTY raises his hand to reveal a large sword.

MARTY

Whoa...

HOLLY

Let's go.

MARTY

Okay.

HOLLY

No. Wait. They've come to us.

MARTY

What has?

HOLLY

Something unpleasant. Something unreal. Something from storybooks, fiction, or...

MARTY

... or what?

A large “moo” udders forth as a human with a cow head enters the stage.

MARTY

A cow man?

HOLLY

That’s not just a –

MARTY

– is it dangerous.

HOLLY

It’s like a –

MARTY

– like a what? It’s just a cow head on a slow-moving human.

HOLLY

Mad Cow Disease!

MARTY

What does that mean?

HOLLY

It’s a hybrid cow-man zombie!

The cow zombie lets loose another “moo” and walks slowly towards the two heroes, arms aloft.

MARTY

Ah! What do we do?

HOLLY

Don't let it touch you!

MARTY

I'll use my sword!

HOLLY

Didn't work. You've got to –

MARTY swiftly removes the cow-headed zombie's head. It falls to the ground.

MARTY

Eww!

HOLLY

Ditto.

MARTY

Let's go!

Transition to RUSSELL and TRANSOM. Same as before.

RUSSELL

Oh pity! The Moo-Zombie died.

TRANSOM

It was a disgusting creature.

RUSSELL

How quick we are to judge, especially being a recent reinvention yourself. The Moo-Zombie didn't belong to this age any less than you, Mr. Dinosaur. In fact, now that I think about it, he clearly belonged more. He was not a mere relic of the past, but a reinvention for the future. The differences are striking when you sit and –

Enter MARTY and HOLLY.

TRANSOM

– Marty!

RUSSELL

Marty!

MARTY

Transom!

HOLLY

Russell!

TRANSOM

See Russell?

MARTY

We killed your zombie cow.

RUSSELL

I already knew that, thank you very much.

HOLLY

And now we're here to kill you!

MARTY

Seriously?

TRANSOM

Marty would never kill anyone.

HOLLY

Oh. I'm sorry. I just thought – I mean you decaptated that zombie-cow-thing and, well –

MARTY

No, I get it.

RUSSELL

He has a very threatening stance right now. Would you mind adjusting a bit, Marty, I don't want your pants to split right down the middle. That can happen when you're postured so –

MARTY

– give me back my dinosaur.

RUSSELL

Certainly.

TRANSOM rises and joins MARTY.

MARTY

Um. Thank you.

TRANSOM

That's it? What about the ransom?

MARTY

Ransom for what?

RUSSELL

A ransom for Transom. It just sounded good. Whatever. Take your leave.

MARTY

How much did he want for you?

TRANSOM

I have no idea.

HOLLY

It must have been a lot.

TRANSOM

Thank you, Holly.

MARTY

How much did you want?

RUSSELL

You intend to meet my demands? Even when your sword threatens to penetrate my throat?

MARTY

I just want to know, okay.

RUSSELL

I wanted...

HOLLY

He can't even bring himself to say it.

RUSSELL

I wanted your friendships. All of you. Together. I've been envious for years. When you're pegged as a troublemaker and a nuisance there's not much you can do about it at a young age. Those things stick with you as you progress through the years at the same school. No escaping the past.

TRANSOM the actor turns into TRANSOM the stuffed dinosaur.

RUSSELL

It always catches up with you in one way or another, though.

MARTY

But those things you did to me!

HOLLY

And me!

RUSSELL

I know, and I'm sorry. I'd given up hope that I could be your friends. I thought a ransom was my best bet. A ransom for Transom. It's funny now that I think about it. It really is, isn't it. Such a sad life to have lived. And Marty, I never knew about your frog allergy. I was gone from school the day the announcement was made.

HOLLY

But you stepped on our heads.

RUSSELL

For that, again, I am so –

MARTY

– sit with us.

HOLLY

What?

MARTY

Tomorrow at lunch. What do you say?

RUSSELL

I –

HOLLY

– just don't step on anybody's head.

RUSSELL

I'd be honored and... well, thank you!

MARTY

See you tomorrow, Russell.

RUSSELL

Yes. Friends. Thank you.

MARTY

Come on, Transom.

MARTY picks up the TRANSOM doll and exits with HOLLY. RUSSELL smiles.

END OF PLAY

Backyard Swords 5.3

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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This play is part of the *Twenty-five Tens Project*
@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

MARTY

A boy with a spoon.

RUSTY

A large bully with a cape.

TRANSOM

A small, stuffed dinosaur.

HOLLY

A girl with a power.

Halfway

MARTY

Everybody needs friends.

MARTY hugs RUSSELL. Blackout.

Moreway

Lights up. Same actors present. No longer hugging.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry I did those mean things to you. I don't know what I was thinking. I didn't fit in. No one liked me. I guess I just started playing the villain. It seemed like a match.

MARTY

I'm sorry too. I wasn't perfect. I made mistakes. I wasn't nice to you. I was part of the problem, not part of the solution.

MARTY and RUSSELL hug. Blackout.

Slow Stretch

MARTY and TRANSOM, at opposite ends of the stage, laughing while moving in slow motion towards one another. Arms outstretched, ready for a huge hug. Suddenly, RUSSELL comes from behind TRANSOM and knocks the dinosaur out with a huge shovel. MARTY slows. RUSSELL carries TRANSOM away. MARTY stands still, motionless, for an extended period of time. — Blackout.

Quick Stretch

Repeat of the previous scene at full speed, with sounds: breathing, panting, crying, striking, etc. MARTY's stillness, for an extended period of time, remains the same length – actual stage time – as before.

Airborne

MARTY holding a small, stuffed, TRANSOM doll.

MARTY

Transom, I wish I could fly like you.

MARTY throws the TRANSOM doll offstage. Another, identical TRANSOM doll flies on from the opposite side of the stage – think the game PORTAL, maybe? – and during MARTY's lines towards the direction he threw the doll, RUSSELL picks up the TRANSOM doll behind MARTY's back.

MARTY

You flew so far! I wish I could fly like you. You're my best friend, Transom! You're my best friend in the whole wide world! I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have you in my life! I love you, Transom! (*Pause.*) Transom? Come back! We'll play hide and seek later. Transom?

MARTY leaves the stage. At the same time, RUSSELL and the TRANSOM doll leave the opposite side. Blackout.

A Grounded Strike

RUSSELL standing behind TRANSOM, watching the actor in the dinosaur costume dig a “hole” in the stage with a shovel. Heavy sounds of shovels striking the hard ground, rustling the soil, disturbing the Earth.

RUSSELL

Keep digging, Dino.

TRANSOM

My name is Transom, Russell. Transom.

RUSSELL

Your name is dead.

TRANSOM

I've had friends that have been dead for years. Centuries. Entire eras.

RUSSELL

Less talk and more digging.

TRANSOM

You're going to bury me here?

RUSSELL

No questions, “dead name.” Keep digging.

TRANSOM continues to dig. The sound grows. Rhythm. Repetition. Tedium... Blackout.

Rotations

HOLLY and RUSSELL mimic each others half-movements, back and forth.

	HOLLY
Russell attacked me.	
	MARTY
Russell also attacked me.	
	HOLLY
He stepped on my head.	
	MARTY
And nearly crushed my skull.	
	HOLLY
I was crying.	
	MARTY
I was crying.	
	HOLLY
The tears mixed with the ground.	
	MARTY
Turning the fertile soil to mud.	
	HOLLY
Heavy boots	
	MARTY
Always hovering overhead.	
	HOLLY
It's just so –	

MARTY

– Russell stole my friend Transom. He’s holding him captive. A ransom for Transom. Perhaps he’s already gone...

Lights flash. A seamless transition to:

The Bend

HOLLY balances on one leg and closes her eyes. She speaks as someone else.

HOLLY

Raise your sword.

MARTY

I will raise my sword.

MARTY is now holding a huge sword.

HOLLY

It is time to –

MARTY

Run.

HOLLY

It is time to –

MARTY

Jump.

HOLLY

It is time to –

MARTY

Save my friend Transom from the evil villain Russell!

HOLLY

No mountain is –

MARTY

Too high.

HOLLY

No sea is –

MARTY

Too wide.

HOLLY

No distance is –

MARTY

Too far for me to travel in service of a lifelong friend.

HOLLY opens her eyes, lowers her leg, and returns to the moment.

HOLLY

Let's –

MARTY

Go.

HOLLY and MARTY run offstage. Blackout.

Battles

An actor wearing an animal head stands firmly on one side of the stage. TRANSOM and RUSSELL look on.

RUSSELL

Aloft!

The animal/actor raises a leg in the air and begins to turn slowly on one foot.

TRANSOM

What are you doing?

RUSSELL

Want to go back into that hole in the ground? Quiet! You'll see.

The animal/actor continues to move in this manner across the stage. Enter MARTY and HOLLY from the other side.

HOLLY

Look out!

MARTY

What is it?

HOLLY

Some sort of sick creation from the cabinet of Dr. Russellini.

MARTY

It doesn't look threatening.

HOLLY

Only one way to find out.

MARTY and HOLLY approach the animal/actor.

TRANSOM

What is it going to do?

RUSSELL

Patience, dear Dino.

The animal/actor slows and pauses, still balancing on one leg, and looks at MARTY and HOLLY.

MARTY

We're not going to hurt you.

HOLLY

We're looking for a dinosaur named Transom.

A seamless transition to:

A Grand Finale

The animal/actor begins to kick their legs high into the air and back down. High into the air and back down. It is controlled, but frightening. The animal/actor enters the space of MARTY and HOLLY. They are forced to retreat.

TRANSOM

Marty! Run!

MARTY

Transom? Transom?

HOLLY

Look out, Marty!

MARTY is kicked in the face by the animal/actor.

RUSSELL

You'll never see your dinsoaur again!

HOLLY

Get up, Marty! Swing!

MARTY swings his sword, cutting the animal/actor to the ground.

HOLLY

Let's get him.

RUSSELL

Oh no!

MARTY

We've got you now, Russell! What do you have to say for yourself?

RUSSELL

I'm sorry I did those mean things to you. I don't know what I was thinking. I didn't fit in. No one liked me. I guess I just started playing the villian. It seemed like a match.

MARTY

I'm sorry too. I wasn't perfect. I made mistakes. I wasn't nice to you. I was part of the problem, not part of the solution. Everybody needs friends.

MARTY hugs RUSSELL. Fade to black.

TRANSOM

But he made me dig a hole in the ground... I've got very short arms... it wasn't nice at all and...

END OF PLAY

Backyard Swords 5.4

by: Kyle Reynolds Conway

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This play is part of the *Twenty-five Tens Project*
@ <https://twentyfivetens.wordpress.com/>

Dramatis Personae

MARTY

A boy with a spoon.

RUSSELL

A bigger boy with a cape.

TRANSOM

A small, stuffed dinosaur.

HOLLY

A girl with a power.

HOLLY

Why are you so mean!

HOLLY

You can do it, Holly!

TRANSOM

Well...

RUSSELL

It's true, but I have a plan. A ransom for Russell – he'll meet my demands! I'll buy love with the money, respect and some gold. I'll make friends and not enemies. Be warm and not cold. Perceptions will alter when they see me for me.

RUSSELL

I'd do anything for my friend.

HOLLY

What are you doing?

MARTY

Watch out!

TRANSOM

Why are you so nice to everyone.

Enter Russell and Marty.

TRANSOM

I hate that Marty! He's always such a smarty! Pleasing the teachers – he sits in first row. From the back the board is blurry – and they say that I'm slow. So I pummell and pound him! I step on his face. A teacher's pet deserves daily playground disgrace.

RUSSELL

Don't I?

HOLLY

It's true, but I have a plan. A ransom for Marty – he'll meet my demands! I'll buy love with the money, respect and some gold. I'll make friends and not enemies. Be warm and not cold. Perceptions will alter when they see me for me.

HOLLY

I've got one more trick up my sleeve.

TRANSOM

Under Marty's boot.

The sound of an armadillo with antlers.

MARTY

Okay.

Transom releases Transom from silence.

MARTY

Only because you're such a great thrower!

TRANSOM

I'm coming. I'm coming! My wings got stuck.

The sound of an armadillo with antlers.

RUSSELL

You can do it, Russell!

HOLLY

In front of you! Now!

MARTY

It's a tower, be quiet. A fort and a fortress. From up here I'll plot Russell's demise.

RUSSELL

Okay.

RUSSELL

Okay.

MARTY

Now I don't have anyone to talk to.

MARTY

I'm glad you think so.

MARTY

I'm glad you think so.

RUSSELL

Only because you're such a great thrower!

TRANSOM

Yeah.

TRANSOM

Okay.

RUSSELL

What are you doing?

HOLLY

Whoa.

An armadillo with antlers crosses the stage while Marty laughs. Russell's head lowers.

TRANSOM

Step right.

HOLLY

Please! Quiet! I've have mischief to plot! I'll concoct it especially for Holly, my friend. Only in tears can this battle end. I'll send armies of vermin! Skunks, locusts and frogs! Armadillos with antlers! Horses with hogs! They'll "nay" and they'll "oink." They'll stink and they'll "croak!" Try laughing now, Holly! This isn't a joke! By the end of this battle – it could take us years – one of us, just one of us, will end up in tears!

RUSSELL

This can only end in tears.

MARTY

You can talk to me.

RUSSELL

New creature combination: Armadillo with antlers.

MARTY

New creature combination: Armadillo with antlers.

RUSSELL

Russell!

HOLLY

Don't I?

MARTY

I won't.

RUSSELL

Why are you so nice to everyone.

MARTY

I'm coming. I'm coming! My wings got stuck.

Holly looks at the ground.

HOLLY

You're hurting Russell.

MARTY

You're very fast.

An armadillo with antlers crosses the stage while Holly laughs. Russell's head lowers.

MARTY

I said, do you really want your dinosaur friend to die?

HOLLY

I'm sorry. Everyone likes you and they call me slow.

HOLLY

Can you sit here for a minute while I go check in with my Mom?

MARTY

Just like me.

HOLLY

Watch out for his boots.

Holly pulls out a large pair of boots and puts them on.

Marty releases Russell from silence.

Enter Marty.

HOLLY

How else could you get two people's heads under your feet?

HOLLY

A locust.

TRANSOM

Ouch.

TRANSOM

You were under his right foot. That's worse.

Holly tries to speak, but cannot make a sound.

The sound of an armadillo with antlers.

The exit.

HOLLY

Russell! My Mom said we could play for – Transom? Hey, where did you go? Russell?

Transom steps out of the way, narrowly missing Marty's kick.

Holly strikes down and slays the antlered armadillo.

HOLLY

Are you...

MARTY

Ouch.

HOLLY

You went to school.

RUSSELL

I won't.

TRANSOM

Russell.

Russell talks with her mind.

TRANSOM

Okay.

HOLLY

Step right.

Lights flash. Transom, the actor, is replaced by Marty the prop. The sword becomes a spoon. It is the playground again.

Transom raises his arm to find that he is, indeed, holding a sword.

HOLLY

What do I do?

An armadillo with antlers crosses the stage while Russell laughs. Transom's head lowers.

HOLLY

I think it's a skunk.

MARTY

Sure.

Holly hugs Russell. Holly gets off of the ground.

RUSSELL

I have the power of my mind. And you have your sword.

MARTY

I think it's a skunk.

Holly the actor places Marty the prop on a bench and waits. Whistling. Rocking back and forth, etc. (Pause.) Enter Marty in goggles and black cape on tip toes. Transom sneaks over to the bench and yanks the Russell prop into his arms and escapes. Russell the actor moves in parallel with the prop. Enter Holly.

TRANSOM

And rescue Russell.

Marty the actor places Holly the prop on a bench and waits. Whistling. Rocking back and forth, etc. (Pause.) Enter Transom in goggles and black cape on tip toes. Russell sneaks over to the bench and yanks the Holly prop into his arms and escapes. Transom the actor moves in parallel with the prop. Enter Holly.

MARTY

I saw you the other day –

TRANSOM

Brought your friend along, I see. I'll crush you both. Have you seen my new shoes?

MARTY

You're hurting Marty.

MARTY

Why are you so mean!

RUSSELL

Oh no! Holly's big boots leave big footprints. Agh!

MARTY

Back in the day a guy named Rex used to bully the kids in my school.

RUSSELL

Just like me.

TRANSOM

What are you doing?

RUSSELL

Under Marty's boot.

TRANSOM

How do you know?

HOLLY

You can do it, Russell!

TRANSOM

You don't have armadillos with antlers.

MARTY

You flew a really long way!

MARTY

You'll never defeat Russell.

MARTY

He's some sort of crazy scientist.

TRANSOM

You've brought your "A" game again, I see. But grades won't help you hear.

RUSSELL

You've brought your "A" game again, I see. But grades won't help you hear.

Transom hugs Russell. Marty gets off of the ground.

Holly steps out of the way, narrowly missing Holly's kick.

MARTY

I'm sorry. Everyone likes you and they call me slow.

TRANSOM

I said, do you really want your dinosaur friend to die?

Holly raises his arm to find that he is, indeed, holding a sword.

TRANSOM

You're hurting Transom.

HOLLY

Okay. All wrongs reversed!

HOLLY

Come back! Come back!

RUSSELL

Just like me.

Enter Holly and Transom.

RUSSELL

It's true, but I have a plan. A ransom for Marty – he'll meet my demands! I'll buy love with the money, respect and some gold. I'll make friends and not enemies. Be warm and not cold. Perceptions will alter when they see me for me.

MARTY

Come back! Come back!

RUSSELL

How do you know?

Transom steps out of the way, narrowly missing Holly's kick.

MARTY

In the front?

MARTY

It's true, but I have a plan. A ransom for Marty – he'll meet my demands! I'll buy love with the money, respect and some gold. I'll make friends and not enemies. Be warm and not cold. Perceptions will alter when they see me for me.

MARTY

I've got one more trick up my sleeve.

MARTY

I saw you the other day –

Russell picks up Russell and his spoon. Smile.

TRANSOM

Well we're not going to let that happen.

HOLLY

A locust.

HOLLY

You're very fast.

HOLLY

Step right.

TRANSOM

It won't ever happen if you keep me locked up in this tree.

MARTY

Watch out for his boots.

HOLLY

You're mean, Holly.

TRANSOM

You're mean, Russell.

RUSSELL

And you the left. I could see you through the tears.

RUSSELL

Time to fight back.

MARTY

What are you doing?

MARTY

I can't believe you gut my hair.

RUSSELL

Maybe... I don't want a hug. Maybe I don't want one.

HOLLY

He's – !

HOLLY

Hello, Transom. I've come to stop you.

TRANSOM

You can do it, Marty!

MARTY

Why are you so nice to everyone.

HOLLY

Transom kidnapped my dinosaur, Holly. My Mom found this ransom note under the doormat this morning. It had a lock of Holly's hair attached to the "R" in "Ransom."

Transom knocks down Marty and puts a boot on her head.

MARTY

I don't know.

HOLLY

Let's go.

MARTY

Why are you so mean!

RUSSELL

He's just outside! No!

MARTY

How do you know?

Marty avoids another kick.

Enter Transom.

Lights shift to Transom and Holly.

END OF PLAY