

The Case of the Cereal Killer
by
Doug Brook

Winner

Fifteenth Annual Ten-Minutes Playwriting Contest (2009)

Actors' Theatre, Santa Cruz, California

Premieres January 2010 in *Eight Tens @ 8 festival*

Directed by Shara Free

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PREVIEW SCRIPT

For the full script, or production/rights inquiries, contact doug@brookwrite.com

(A kitchen. Early morning sunlight comes through the window into the shadowy room.

MASON enters in his pajamas. He pulls out a bowl, spoon, and box of cereal, puts them on the table. **HE** takes a trenchcoat and fedora off the rack by the door, goes outside.

SOMEONE comes through in the shadows, obscured in a hooded sweatshirt, empties the cereal box into the bowl, takes the bowl and spoon, and leaves.

MASON re-enters with a newspaper, sees the bowl is missing, looks to the audience. 1940s detective music plays.)

MASON

It was a Monday morning like any other Monday morning. Except that it wasn't. I was home after dawn, and I can count on one hand the number of times that's happened, with six or seven fingers to spare. For once, the beneficiary of the newspaper subscription I pay for was me instead of the neighbors or dogs. But this Monday was different for another reason. There was a disappearance. You can't count on the police in a case like this. There was only one man for the job. Sure I was too close to it. But I care about every case, every innocent victim who comes through my door. So it's no different when the victim who comes through my door is me.

(**ELLEN** enters in a sweatshirt with the hood down.)

There's always a woman who comes in at a time like this. It never fails.

ELLEN

Good morning.

MASON

This one's no victim, though.

ELLEN

You got that right.

MASON

She's a tough one, different from the other women who come through my door.

ELLEN

There better not be any other women coming through your door.

MASON

She's a smart one, too. She talks like she can hear my internal monologue. I'll have to be careful with her.

ELLEN

Will you stop playing and have breakfast with me for once.

MASON

(To **ELLEN**) I'd like to, sweetheart. You know I'd like to. But I can't. And I think you might know why.

ELLEN

Because you're busy being dressed like a schmuck, pretending to be a detective on the one morning you have off this month?

MASON

(To audience) Misdirection. A simple evasion. Of course, I see right through it. She knows something's wrong. And she knows that I know. And she knows that I know that she knows that I know. Now it's time to cleverly get it out of her.

ELLEN

Is this some passive aggressive way to make a point? Or have you been sniffing the vapors at work a little too long?

MASON

(To **ELLEN**) I'm sniffing around for something. And I think you know what it is.

ELLEN

I have no idea what it is.

MASON

Are you sure? You're not hiding something? I can tell, you know.

ELLEN

You think I'm hiding something? Fine. You can tell your audience. I'm going back to bed.

MASON

Back to finish the crime, perhaps?

(**ELLEN** looks back at him suddenly, then exits.)

(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

(To audience) Maybe she wanted breakfast in bed. Maybe she wanted something more in bed. Or maybe she didn't want anything at all. She's a tough one to read. But she'll be back. They always come back.

(CASEY enters in a sweatshirt, with the hood down.)

Another one enters. The game is afoot.

CASEY

Hey, Dad. Playing detective again?

MASON

(To audience) Feigning familiarity is an old ploy that distracts from the facts.

CASEY

Sure, Dad. Whatever.

MASON

(To CASEY) I suppose you know why you're here.

CASEY

Yeah. You and mom had too much to drink one night.

MASON

I mean why you're here this morning, right now.

CASEY

Because I'm hungry and want breakfast?

MASON

Do you? Are you sure you're hungry?

CASEY

Pretty sure. Look, I know you're not usually around this time of day, but you'll have to take my word for it. I always walk in around now, knowing for sure if I'm hungry. Mom probably came in already. Lindsay will be next if she ever gets out of the shower. Everything's normal, except for you.

MASON

It's normal that none of you have breakfast together?

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