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The Bad Habit
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More Great Plays From OWP

Artificial

by **Sean Kenealy**

2 Males

Synopsis: When Dan enters an empty cafe just after midnight on New Years, wielding a guitar case and razor sharp tongue, he sparks the ire of cafe manager Charles, who wants nothing more than to close up, albeit a bit early. What transpires between the two are conversations and stories ranging from the trivial to the tragic, almost bringing the men to blows, and definitely blurring the lines between the truth and the artificial.

Does The Body Good

by **Patrick Link**

2 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: A seductive housewife entices a young milkman his first day on the job. A depressed middle school teacher struggles to extract himself from a sexual affair with the precocious 8th grade girl who idolizes him. In *Does The Body Good* these two seemingly unrelated liaisons divide the stage into a distorted mirror image of the other, build on each other's intensity, and finally collide into a perfect storm of unfulfilled yearnings.

Spitting Daisies

by **Kerri Kochanski**

1 Male, 1 Female

Synopsis: When Frank, a psychology student, approaches a depressed Girl on a subway car at 2 A.M. and offers to give her therapy, the Girl insists he is a "sicko" stalker. As the train pulls closer to the station, Frank knows he must succeed in connecting with the Girl in order to prevent her from committing suicide. As she continually rejects his attempts at connection, he is forced to reveal the most important night of his life, the night she, unbeknownst to her, saved his life.

THE BAD HABIT was originally produced in August 2009 by the Eclectic Theatre Company in Los Angeles, CA. It was produced by Rebecca Bonebrake. Set and lighting design was by John Dickey. Stage Manager was Amanda Peterson. It was directed by Chelsea Sutton.

The cast was as follows:

OLIVIA	Taylor Ashbrook
JASMINE	Gwen Copeland
VICTORIA	Chris Krebsbach

THE BAD HABIT
By Connie Egan

CAST OF CHARACTERS

VICTORIA	Former ballerina (30ish)
OLIVIA	Victoria's mother (50ish)
JASMINE	Yoga, Pilates instructor (20ish)

TIME: The Present

PLACE: Victoria's Manhattan apartment

THE SET: The stage is an open space-brick exposed walls, with an old ballet barre, mirror, dresser, chairs, etc. It's a combination den/living room, dance studio. Books and magazines are stacked everywhere. It's both cozy, and a fire hazard.

THE BAD HABIT

Scene I

(Classical music fills the air. VICTORIA enters. She is in her mid 30s and has a hard, chunky, compact body. She is beautiful, but not in the typical actress, model, kind of way. She is warming up her feet, doing ballet ankle stretches. She is wearing multiple layers of tights, warm ups, ripped, leggings, etc. She slowly waters plants, nibbles pretzels, and continues to stretch out her feet, legs, etc. There is an ease about her multi tasking. It's apparent that she's a former ballet dancer, and this is a daily routine. She takes off a tattered sweater, revealing her pale slashed arms. The red slices are a shocking contrast to her black, grey, dull surroundings and clothes. She's a "cutter". She does not acknowledge the scars existence. She is changing into pointe shoes when chaotic noise in the hall interrupts her routine. She quickly slips on her sweater.)

(OLIVIA enters. She brings chaos with her. She's in her mid 50s—thin, fit, full of energy. She begins dropping her bags, stripping off layers of jackets, warm up pants, etc... the entire mood of the room has changed. VICTORIA continues her stretching/yoga routine.)

OLIVIA: Hey Sweetie, I'm running late. Sorry.

VICTORIA: Are we scheduled for today? I thought that we were doing this tomorrow. I'm totally thrown off by Monday being a holiday. What day is it?

OLIVIA: Wednesday.

VICTORIA: Wednesday? I've lost a day somewhere.

OLIVIA: I was lucky enough to catch a cab, but the driver spent the entire time on his cell phone. How rude! I can understand if I'm on the phone. I'm the customer. But he's on the phone, and then he missed turning when I suggested that we turn, and then I'm caught in that God awful cross-town traffic. I could have screamed. What a nightmare.

VICTORIA: Jasmine obviously hasn't arrived yet.

OLIVIA: Do I have to hear other people's laundry list of life's minutia, while being held captive in a cab, or waiting in a grocery line? Have you noticed how they talk extremely loud? They aren't having a conversation with the person on the other line, they are actually performing for us innocent bystanders! They WANT us to listen to them. Why do they feel the need to share their tedious info with the rest of the world? I'm self conscious about other people overhearing my choice of music. My ipod is sacred. I don't blare music out of my apartment window for the whole world to hear. It's my personal play list. No one needs to know what I listen to. It's none of their damn business. There's no sense of personal space vs. private space any more. An apartment, a car, those are personal spaces. How about women who put on makeup in the subway? What's with that? Subways, grocery store lines, restaurants—those are public spaces. So, why should I have to listen to their music, or their fight with their shitty boyfriend, or worse yet, their pretentious cell phone conversations at a dinner table in a restaurant while their date sits there idle. That is private behavior in a public space. Besides, hello? News flash! No one does business on a Saturday night at 9 pm. Period. They look like insensitive assholes, not big shots. And, why do these women tolerate their behavior?

VICTORIA: Aren't you getting a little worked up about nothing?

OLIVIA: Worked up? Why aren't you worked up about this? It's making me crazy! People nowadays have no qualms about spreading their opinions, phone conversations, or music all over the planet. It's noise pollution. Do you notice how people seem compelled to share their "inner" life with complete strangers? Face Book. My Space. Jesus Christ what an embarrassment! I can't imagine the idea of printing my teenage diary on the Internet for the entire world to see. #1, I never had a diary. How queer. (Continued)

OLIVIA (Cont'd): #2 teenage ramblings are so trite and humiliating. They get no better in their 20s. We are living in a world of narcissists! My God, at the gym, complete strangers tell me their life stories on the treadmill. What is that about? I don't even know their names, but I know that they are on husband #2; they have a daughter who doesn't speak to them, an emotionally distant son, a dead acting career, and a dying mother. What is that about? I don't tell my closest friends about the goings on in my life.

VICTORIA: Maybe you should.

OLIVIA: There is something called "too much information." Anyway, everyone has shrinks nowadays. Go to a shrink if you have to, but keep some of this shit to yourself.

VICTORIA: Shit?

OLIVIA: What?

VICTORIA: Shit?

OLIVIA: Pardon me?

VICTORIA: You said "shit."

OLIVIA: I did?

VICTORIA: Yes. You've sworn a lot, actually.

OLIVIA: Really?

VICTORIA: Uh huh.

OLIVIA: Oh, sorry.

VICTORIA: It's your resolution, not mine. I could give a shit if you swear or not.

OLIVIA: Where's the jar? *(She rummages around for her purse, takes out a couple of bucks, and puts it into the empty coffee can—which reads “bad habit jar.”)* It's worth it once a year to try to better myself. It's such a terrible sign of ignorance.

VICTORIA: It's a lost cause. It's the same thing, year after year.

OLIVIA: People can change, you know. That's why they go to shrinks, I guess. They hope that they can change. Stop the patterns.

VICTORIA: I guess.

OLIVIA:
Jeez Louise, you have a shrink. I have a shrink because your shrink can't talk to me, but can talk to my shrink about you. Then, my shrink can talk to me about your shrink's perspective on things, although that has never happened—thank you very much. Ka-ching Ka-ching. My shrink cannot be your father's shrink, because she is my advocate, so we would have to go to a separate couples counselor. Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Counselor, Social Worker, Life Coach. What has happened to us? There's three of us and three shrinks. It's worse than lawyers. You've got “issues,” I've got “issues.” Who the hell doesn't have “issues”? *(Two fingers on each hand indicating quotation marks, before and after the word issues.)*

(VICTORIA, who had been doing yoga routine throughout the scene, now just lying on the floor looking up at the ceiling.)

OLIVIA: What the hell does “issues” mean, really? My God, you can be a serial killer, and they will say you “have issues,” and then they will say that a 10 year old has “self esteem issues.” How can one word mean both? Rape is the same as Self Esteem? Murder as insecurity? Issues, Issues. These people don't know issues! I've lived a life full of “issues,” but do I subject them to the rest of the world? (Continued)

OLIVIA (Cont'd): Fuck no, I keep them to myself. Why can't they keep their fucking "issues" to themselves? PUT AWAY YOUR FUCKING INNER CHILD. I DON'T WANT TO MEET YOUR INNER CHILD— THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED AN INNER CHILD. IT'S AN INNER-NOT AN OUTER CHILD!

VICTORIA: Fuck?

OLIVIA: Fuck?

VICTORIA: You said "fuck."

OLIVIA: Shit!

VICTORIA: Shit?

OLIVIA: Fucking shit, God damn it.

VICTORIA: That's good (*giggling*).

(OLIVIA walks to her bag, mumbling, digs out a ten dollar bill, jams it into the can.)

VICTORIA: This is your kiddie game. No one cares if you swear or not. You are an adult for God's sake. Your intolerance for the words gives them more impact than they have naturally. If you let-it-go, you'll stop saying them. P.S. They're a sign of anger, not illiteracy.

OLIVIA: I'm not angry. We've just all become so uncivilized. It's so inarticulate of me. I can stop using that kind of language. I'm capable of growth and change. (*Silence*) Where's Jasmine? (*Silence*) Are you sure her name is "Jasmine"? Do you really think that her mother named her Jasmine, or Jasmeane? That sounds like a made up, in college kind of name. I'm a bohemian, dread lock wearing yoga instructor, so my name can't be Elizabeth, it must be Jasmine. Victoria was an unusual name when you were born. Rather Shakespearean.

(The phone rings. VICTORIA scrambles around, looking under piles of clothes and magazines. OLIVIA joins in the search. The phone cannot be found. The answering machine picks up . . . we hear . . . “Hi, this is Tory, leave a message and I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.” BEEP! We hear (over the roar of a subway train, people in the background) . . . “Hello, hello, it’s me, Jasmine. I’m running late, as you’ve probably discovered. I’ve had the morning from hell—I’m up to my eyeballs with issues. First, my cat got out of the apartment, then I got locked out, I had to wait for Matt, who had a spare key, I couldn’t find a fucking cab (murmuring in the background). Listen here, lady, this is a public subway. I have every right to speak to whoever I want on MY phone, whenever I want to. Go fuck yourself” . . . BEEP!)

OLIVIA: She’s our spiritual guide?

(Black out.)

Scene II

(The apartment/studio has boxes stacked on top of each other. VICTORIA is obviously in the middle of a move. OLIVIA sits folding piles of clothes, putting them neatly in a box. She has been at this for quite a while. Throughout the scene, the apartment will get totally packed up—books, clothes, cooking stuff. She continually sips white wine.)

OLIVIA: I don’t know what you hope to find in Vermont. The winters are so long and grey there. I suspect that the entire state suffers from acute depression—due to the lack of sunlight, and eternal winter. Minneapolis has even longer winters, but it’s sunny there—flat, like a pancake flat, dismally, mindbendingly flat, but sunny. Everyone’s so damn friendly there. They carry on lengthy conversations with total strangers. That can be really annoying. And they all look so healthy in Minneapolis. I don’t understand that—they eat cheese curds, for heaven’s sake. People who eat cheese curds should all weight 300 pounds. What the hell is a cheese curd anyway? c h e e e e e e e e s e c u r d. (Continued)

OLIVIA (Cont'd): Who could put something with a name like that in their mouth? Would you eat a cheese curd? I certainly wouldn't. But then again, I don't weigh 300 pounds. *(Pause)* Neither do you for that matter, but you are more experimental in the food department than me. Don't say "all you eat is chicken." That simply isn't true. I cooked three meals a day for years for you. A person gets tired, that's all. Chicken is dependable, it's easy to prepare, it's not fattening, you can always fall back on it.

(Silence)

OLIVIA: Is Craig excited to go to Vermont? He's very "dependable." I was always partial to Roberto. Where is he now? Do you ever hear from him? I bet he's married by now, with tons of little kids-boys I bet. Do you ever hear from him? Victoria? Tory?? What are you doing? Why am I out here working all by myself? Tory?

(We hear a muffled reply.)

OLIVIA: Victoria? Answer me right now? What are you doing?

(Victoria enters with a toothbrush in her mouth, and bubbles all over her lips. Her sleeves are pushed up, exposing her scarred arms.)

VICTORIA: I twoooold yooou tah I doont . . .

OLIVIA: For God's sake, finish what you're doing and then come talk to me. I can't understand one word you're saying. *(She has obviously seen Victoria's arms.)*

(Victoria exits. Olivia is visibly upset.)

OLIVIA: I was saying that I haven't heard you mention Roberto recently. Do you keep in touch? Where is he now? *(Pause)* Do you have any friends in Vermont? Have you met any of your colleagues? Who would you call if you needed help up there? I hope that you'll find new friends quickly. Are you and Craig serious enough to be moving in together?