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SCRIPT SAMPLE

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Drinking Zombies
By D.T. Arcieri

CHARLES stands alone on stage and addresses the audience directly.

CHARLES: Here's a quote: "You must have chaos in you, if you would give birth to a dancing star". Pretty fucking cool, huh? "You must have chaos in you, if you would give birth to a dancing star. "... a dancing star". (beat) Do you know who said that? No, not me. (beat) Well, I did say it. Just now, anyway. What I meant was - who said it originally.(beat) It was Nietzsche. *Fucking* Nietzsche.

He lights a cigarette and sits down. Lights up on Nancy who is at a blackboard.

NANCY: Three things, Charles: One - We all appreciate the deep thoughts and insights you bring to philosophy class every week, but two - it wouldn't be inappropriate for you to consider not over-seasoning them with vulgarities, and three - there's no smoking in any building on campus.

CHARLES: Huh?

NANCY: There's no smoking on campus.

He puts out the cigarette.

CHARLES: Even outside?

NANCY: Of course you can smoke outside. I said in any building.

CHARLES: Sartre smoked. Kierkegaard smoked. (beat) I bet Nietzsche smoked.

NANCY: What's your point, Charles?

CHARLES: So, now I have to have a point, too? I thought this was philosophy.

NANCY: Although I'm not sure what you really mean, I do find that remark to be implicitly offensive.

CHARLES: Oh, yeah? Well, good! (beat) I think.

NANCY: It's time to go now. Class is over.

CHARLES: You know, I could have taken an anthropology course or... something other than philosophy for my humanities requirement.

She is clearly preparing to leave.

NANCY: Yes, I know that. All too well.

CHARLES: (after a thoughtful pause) What kind of a car do you drive?

NANCY: What?

CHARLES: Your car, what kind is it?

NANCY: *One* - that is irrelevant. *Two* - it's none of your business, and *three* - do you need a ride? Is that why you're asking?

CHARLES: *A* - It's not irrelevant at all. I think the class would like to know if you drive a Hyundai or a Porsche. *Two* - it is our business... ah, somehow. And *C*...

NANCY: (interrupting) Charles, Charles, I'm not sure if you noticed but... you *are* the class.

He looks around.

CHARLES: Yes, well, I guess I... I *am* the class. That's kind of weird.

NANCY: A 1:1 student/faculty ratio isn't weird. Actually it's quite impressive. Especially since this is a State college and you're paying a relatively inexpensive tuition. You should be quite happy that you're the only student in this class.

CHARLES: I'm happy, okay? I really am. But that leads me back to the part where I said the class, the *whole* class, wants to know what kind of car you drive.

NANCY: (increasingly agitated) There are only two reasons why you might want to familiarize yourself with the automobile I own. Either, using inductive reasoning, you want to derive some general truth about me based on how expensive or how sporty the car is, or,

on a practical level you need a ride. Although, if it is the latter, then the kind of car I drive is meaningless, correct? (beat) What I mean is, if you need a ride, what does it really matter if I take you home in a Hyundai or a Porsche!?! (beat) I'm sorry. Please excuse me.

CHARLES: Whoa, take it easy there, Prof. Nobody's going home with anybody here. We've only know each other a couple of weeks now. The semester's still young. I need a little more intellectual foreplay before we... *you know*.

NANCY: What are you talking about?

CHARLES: Before we... get intimate.

NANCY: You're joking with me.

CHARLES: I think that when a professor invites a student home to have sex, that it's... well, no joke.

NANCY: I'm engaged, Charles.

CHARLES: And I have a girlfriend, so I'm glad this isn't an ethics course.

NANCY: I've missed something here. Some critical piece of information that links this conversation to reality.

CHARLES: I think that what's missing here is ah... is consideration for how I feel about the whole thing.

NANCY: About what whole thing?

CHARLES: *One* - how I feel about sleeping with an engaged woman, *B* - about your inability to objectively evaluate me in this course once the formal student/teacher relationship has been... compromised, *Three* - about...

NANCY: (interrupting) I drive a BMW! A 1972 BMW, in mint condition! It's white and it shines! All right? Are you happy?

CHARLES: I'd be happy if... you could give me a ride.

NANCY: I'm somewhat reluctant to offer you one now.

CHARLES: It's raining out.

Nancy brandishes her umbrella.

NANCY: I know.

CHARLES: *Hard.*

NANCY: So...

CHARLES: So... I'm sorry about the sex stuff. I was joking with you.

NANCY: Charles, it's good thing for you to learn at this point that humor and philosophy are, for the most part, mutually exclusive.

CHARLES: Look, I just need a ride to the Hukalau.

NANCY: The Hukalau? That sleazy tiki bar over on Main Street?

CHARLES: Yeah, I like it, too. It's got just the right atmosphere.

Nancy considers his request thoughtfully.

NANCY: Okay. But no more funny stuff.

CHARLES: Sure. I didn't mean to piss you off.

She has trouble cursing.

NANCY: I'm not... *pissed off.*

They begin to exit.

CHARLES: Oh, I had you going there. I like when you get passionate. (beat) Nietzsche was *fucking* passionate.

She has an angry/worried look on her face, while he wears a cross between a smirk and a smile. Lights down on the philosophy classroom. Lights up on a biology classroom where Thomas is lecturing. He addresses the audience directly and is wearing a white laboratory coat. A large image of a tomato is projected on the screen behind him.

THOMAS: In 1890, the Supreme Court, our nation's highest

tribunal, was called on to decide whether a tomato what vegetable or a fruit. They decided, because it was served with dinner and not dessert, that it was a vegetable. But these eminent judges were wrong. The tomato is a fruit. (beat) The Supreme Court used social criteria to make a biological distinction. That was... unwise, for we must look to the *reproductive* anatomy and physiology of plants to clearly and unambiguously define what a fruit is. (beat) So, what is fruit, biologically? It is the ripened ovary of a flowering plant. It is the vessel in which the seeds are carried. (beat) You know that onions and celery are not fruits. And you know that apples and oranges are. But what about green pepper and yellow squash? (beat) *Huh!?* (beat) Clearly they are fruits because they have seeds! They are *reproductive* structures! Yes, plants have sex! But I don't want to get into plant sex now. That's another lecture.

Lights down on Thomas in the biology classroom and up on Ellen and Charles at the Hukalau. It is a sleazy/tacky tiki bar.

ELLEN: (re: drink) What *is* that?

CHARLES: It's called a zombie. It's made with seven different kinds of rum.

ELLEN: That could damage your brain. You could go blind or deaf.

CHARLES: (pretends to be deaf) What?

ELLEN: Why would you order a drink like that?

CHARLES: Because four Hawaiians with torches carry it out from behind the bar while they're chanting some sacred Polynesian prayer that's part of the traditional volcano human sacrifice ritual. This is what the chosen ones drank before the high priest pushed them into the flaming pit.(beat) You're an anthropology major, Ellen. Does this ring a bell at all?

ELLEN: You could have ordered a beer like every other guy in this dive.

He displays his tiny drink umbrella.

CHARLES: Yes, that's true. But look at what I got. (beat) And besides, I'm not like the other undergraduates, am I?

ELLEN: No, you're not.

He pushes the drink toward her.

CHARLES: I want you to share this drink with me, Ellen. Because tonight we are going to jump into the flaming pit together.

ELLEN: What flaming pit?

CHARLES: The flaming pit of desire.

ELLEN: You're scaring me.

CHARLES: Is that a bad thing?

ELLEN: No. I kind of like it.

He pulls the drink back to himself.

CHARLES: Maybe you should order a diet coke.

She pulls the drink back to her.

ELLEN : No, no. Let me have a sip. I want to jump into the flaming pit.

He pulls the drink back again.

CHARLES: I'm not so sure you're ready. How do I know you are one of the chosen?

ELLEN: (guessing) Because... you are the high priest?

CHARLES: (trance-like) That's right.

ELLEN: You are the High Priest of Love, and *you* have chosen me.

CHARLES: (trance-like) Yes.

ELLEN: Because... you *desire* me.

The trance is broken. He pushes the drink back to her.

CHARLES: *Oh yeah.*

She sips the zombie and winces.

ELLEN: That is one crappy drink.

CHARLES: Don't think of it as a cocktail. Think of it as... spiritual anesthesia.

ELLEN: Even when you sit at a bar and get stupid drunk you're interesting. That's why I love you, Charles.

CHARLES: (winces) Oh God, that word again.

ELLEN: It's just Cupid's arrow.

CHARLES: But it's stuck in my ass.

She pushes the drink back to him.

ELLEN: This will help.

CHARLES: Thank you.

ELLEN: How was your philosophy class?

CHARLES: Philosophy? (beat) It was... *enlightening*.

ELLEN: Do you like your professor?

CHARLES: Yeah, I think I do.

He attempts to light a cigarette.

ELLEN: Don't smoke that.

Charles stares at his cigarette, but does not light it. Lights down on the Hukalau and up on Nancy who is speaking on the telephone.

NANCY: Maybe it's burnout. I don't know. I'm somewhere between tired and bored. I'm... I'm uninspired. My book is going nowhere. The teaching... it's not challenging. Not like it use to be. And Thomas is... is always in his laboratory or in the classroom. I don't get to see a lot of him because he's... so busy. Which is fine, I guess. That's why I was attracted to him in the first place - he's a very talented biologist and educator. But there's just no... passion. He's more into plant sex, actually. (beat) But I'm no flower.

Lights down on Nancy and up on Charles' bedroom. We see the

naked silhouettes in bed. Charles is laying down and Ellen is sitting on him. Polynesian native drumming is playing. They have just finished making love.

ELLEN: You are a god! A love god! A *sex* god!

CHARLES: *Oh, yeah.*

ELLEN: Sex with you is like some sacred ritual. It's deep and... pure, and yet so very... deviate.

CHARLES: Thank you.

ELLEN: With Ted it was only physical. With Bob it reached an emotional level. But with you it's... it's spiritual. I mean it. The world is one right now, and everything and everyone is making love. You've turned it into a sex planet.

There is a pause here.

CHARLES: Who are Ted and Bob?

Lights up on Thomas who is lecturing to his biology class. Charles' room is still lit, the natives are still drumming and the silhouettes engage in more activity. The image of a flower is projected on the screen.

THOMAS: The human species has no monopoly on its preoccupation with sex. All living things prioritize the procreative process. I mean, even plants do it. And the most successful plants do it with flowers. Indeed, a flower is a very effective *sexual* structure designed to attract insects or other animals that help with pollination. And that's how *sperm* meets *egg*. With flowering plants, anyway.

Thomas hesitates for a moment as an old memory distracts him. He is not lecturing anymore, but remembering in a softer tone a vivid image from his childhood. He comes out from behind the podium. Lights fade on the silhouettes in Charles' room.

THOMAS: Flowers... they remind me of... of my mother. She had a beautiful garden full of flowers and fruit and bees and butterflies. She was so young and pretty... when I was a little boy. With her glowing skin and long blonde hair. And... and she wore these light, cottony sun dresses when she worked in the garden, and sometimes a scarf around her head. She was so... beautiful.

The image on the screen changes from a flower to a mushroom. He sees it and "comes to", regaining his train of thought. He moves back to the podium and continues lecturing.

THOMAS: Mushrooms are also sexual. With fungi, however, there are no boys and girls, but rather complimentary mating strains. It's difficult for us to tell them apart, but they sure know the difference. (beat) So, next time you are outside on your lawn or in your garden, or just enjoying a bowl of cream of mushroom soup, think about it - sex is happening all around you, all the time! We are literally *surrounded* by sex!

Lights down on Thomas' lecture and up on Nancy who is still on the phone.

NANCY: Thomas is coming over tonight. (pause) Yes, I have a plan. Nothing will be left to chance. I have the wine. (pause) An Australian chardonnay. (pause) If you really must know...

She picks up the bottle to read the label in an impatient manner.

NANCY: A 2004 Graham Vineyards chardonnay. (pause) Yes, it's very nice. I've stuffed some mushrooms to go with it. I know how he feels about a good fungus. Oh, and I bought some flowers. Hope this isn't overkill. (pause) Sure - music, dim lights, the whole bit. (pause) Yes, of course. A full report will be on your desk in the morning. Bye.