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*Pessimistic Optimism*

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- **THE VIEWING** (2m, 1f, one set, twenty minutes) - A priest, and art critic and a beautiful painter match wits at a funeral-slash-performance art show.

# Pessimistic Optimism

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## PLAY HISTORY

**ALL 49 STATES** premiered in Los Angeles at the 2nd Stage Theatre as part of *Altered States* in 2006.

**BLACK & DECKER** premiered in Los Angeles at the 2nd Stage Theatre as part of *Death Comes To Us All* in 2006.

**DUDE LOOKS LIKE A LADY** premiered in Los Angeles at the Lankershim Arts Center as part of *Is This Porn?* in 2003.

**LOVE IN THE TIME OF BAILOUT** premiered simultaneously in Los Angeles at the Luna Stage as part of *The Writer Speaks* and Chattanooga, TN at the Ensemble Theatre of Chattanooga in 2010.

**RESERVATIONS** premiered in Los Angeles at the Lankershim Arts Center as part of *Auto-Biographies* in 2000.

**REVERSED CURSE** premiered in Los Angeles at the Elephant Theatre Asylum as part of *Go Team Go!* in 2004.

## MONOLOGUE HISTORY

The monologues in this collection were developed in the Naked Angeles Theatre Company, Tuesday's @ 9 (Los Angeles) development program in 2011.

Since their birth the monologues have been performed by actors all across the United States. They were written as an antidote to the inactive and indirect monologues, often found in monologue books, that actors mistakenly use for auditions. As a young acting student I was fortunate to learn that inactive story-telling, the "let me tell you about..." monologues, are a trap for actors. The best monologues are always active, immediate, and engaging.

## ALL 49 STATES

### **Characters:**

PRESIDENT JENNA BUSH – Over 35.

VICE PRESIDENT BARBARA BUSH – Same age as her sister Jenna.

SECRETARY OF STATE CHELSEA CLINTON – A bit older than the twins.

DIRECTOR OF FEMA, SEBASTIAN TURK – Any age over 35.

*(In the darkness we hear a large bong rip. As the lights rise we see PRESIDENT JENNA BUSH exhaling a large cloud of smoke. She sits of the floor of the Oval Office, a large sheet of paper and numerous crayons surround her. The stage can be bare or scattered chairs may be used.)*

JENNA: Oh yeah... legalizing you was a great idea.

*(JENNA sets the bong down and resumes coloring. After a few beats SECRETARY OF STATE CHELSEA CLINTON enters. She holds a stack of files and has some sort of phone receiver in her ear, such as Bluetooth.)*

CHELSEA: Madam President... it's been thirteen minutes, we can't wait any longer. How would you like us to proceed?

JENNA: Oh, come on Chels. I'm waiting on the VP to get here. Take a bong rip and relax.

CHELSEA: With all due respect...

JENNA: With all due respect to you, I'm the Prez. You're just the Secretary of State. I think I know how to handle things.

CHELSEA: This is the largest natural disaster since Katrina during your fathers Presidency. You don't want a repeat of that, do you?

JENNA: Here we go again. You just love to bring that shit up don't you? Just because everyone loved your dad more than mine don't mean he was a bad President. My pops was a War-Time President, he had a lot more to deal with than your old man.

CHELSEA: Madam President, this has nothing to do with...

JENNA: Chels, it's been two years. Call me Jenna. Everybody else does.

*(VICE PRESIDENT BARBARA BUSH, Jenna's twin enters. She holds both hands up in order to let her newly manicured nails dry.)*

BARBARA: Oh my God. That guy from PETA has been texting me for the last fifteen minutes. It's not like I can text him back...  
*(Wiggling her fingers)* Hello...

CHELSEA: You mean FEMA.

BARBARA: *(Snide)* Oh, hello Chelsea. Didn't see you there. And that's what I said, PETA.

CHELSEA: FEMA.

BARBARA: FETA?

CHELSEA: FE-MA! Federal Emergency Management Agency. They're the ones who help when things like this happen.

JENNA: Why do animal people care so much?

BARBARA: Lots of people there have pets.

CHELSEA: They're not the animal people! Madam President, Madam Vice President, this is incredibly serious. California has just fallen into the ocean. The quake registered a ten on the Richter Scale. That's the largest quake in history in case you didn't know. Las Vegas is now ocean front property. We need to act now...

BARBARA: See Jenna. I told you that high rise condo in Vegas was a good idea. That property value just tripled.

JENNA: You're right.

*(BARBARA finally gets a good look at what JENNA is drawing.)*

BARBARA: Oh, that's pretty, sis.

JENNA: Isn't it. I think it will really brighten things up. Just what this country's been missing.

*(BARBARA sits next to JENNA on the floor and picks up the bong.)*

BARBARA: Did you just pack this?

JENNA: Yeah, it's the sticky-icky.

CHELSEA: I really don't think that bong rips should be your priority right now.

JENNA: Chelsea! Fuck! I realize the severity of this shit. *(Referring to her drawing.)* Why do you think I'm working on this?

CHELSEA: I have no idea. It looks like some kids first kindergarten drawing.

JENNA: Well it's a rough draft. The final document will be done by professionals, of course.

BARBARA: Yeah.

CHELSEA: This is ridiculous. *(Her ear piece triggers. She taps the side and answers)* This is C.C. Hello sir. Yes, we are working on an appropriate course of action. I understand. No, this is not a repeat of Katrina. I'm still waiting on word from the President. Well, I don't think that's necessary. If you insist. Bye-bye. *(She hangs up.)* The was the Director of PETA... FEMA.

BARBARA: He's calling you now?

CHELSEA: He said he can't wait any longer. He's coming down to speak with you.

JENNA: Okay, okay. Just let me finish this.

BARBARA: I hate those stuffy old bureaucrats.

CHELSEA: He's actually not that old. Harvard educated, comes from a wealthy family, served in the second Iraq war, and he'll be here any minute.

## Pomegranate

*ELEANOR, late 20's or early 30's, sits in a tiny chair to speak with a pair of young parents.*

ELEANORE

Thank you both for coming in on such short notice. I know you're both very busy with your spring kitchen remodeling, but I felt it was important that we had some one on one time. Let me start by saying that little Pomegranate is a truly gifted student. Clearly the breeding of two highly attractive and privileged people such as yourselves has paid off for her. She's pretty and popular, very polite, has great aptitude for math and vocabulary and all the other subjects we're forced to bore them with. I think she has what it takes to succeed at a higher level, but in order for her to do that; we all need to go the extra mile. Now, what do I mean by that? I teach an exclusive after school program at the local Celebrity Center and I think Pommy should enroll immediately; before we miss our window and she develops some pesky habit like modesty. I can sense your skepticism, but hear me out before your make a decision. There is something you need to be very clear on when thinking about your daughter's future. She appears to have all the tools to do well here at the Pre-K level, and for that matter, all the way though higher education. But then what? You and I both know that all that education is only going to set her up for a life filled with constant job hunting in a dead market. In the next ten years there won't be any jobs left for smart, well rounded people; so why even go down that desolate road, right? Pommy is special... she's pretty and comes from money... and my program can help set her up for life in the only viable market we have left in this country... reality entertainment. There's

## **BLACK & DECKER**

A ten minute Halloween comedy

### **Characters:**

BLACK – 20's, a go getter.

DECKER – 20's, a slacker.

DEATH – You know him, right?

*(At rise Decker sits at a lone table on stage. He wears a blonde wig in pig tails, wife beater with large fake breasts underneath, and Daisy Duke shorts. The table is a mess of items. Among them the items are a bowl of candy corn, jell-o shots, a digital camera, and empty beer bottles. Decker calls offstage.)*

DECKER: Black?

BLACK: *(Offstage.)* What?

DECKER: Ready?

BLACK: Almost.

DECKER: Well come on for fuck sake.

BLACK: It's gotta be good.

DECKER: Yeah, I get that. You've been in there twenty minutes.

BLACK: Yeah well, it's gotta be good.

DECKER: It's never gonna be as good as mine, so don't try so hard.

BLACK: You are a sadly attractive woman.

DECKER: Not just any woman... a wet T-shirt contestant.

*(Decker pours what's left of a beer on his chest, exposing his ample bosom. He strokes his breasts.)*

DECKER: Oh, baby. I am one hot bitch.

*(Decker tosses a piece of candy corn in the air and catches it in his mouth, or tries to.)*

BLACK: *(Still offstage.)* Shit, I think I used too much soup.

*(There is a knock stage left.)*

BLACK: Can you get that?

DECKER: You don't even have any fucking candy.

BLACK: Give 'em some candy corn.

DECKER: I'm eating the candy corn. *(Decker tosses another piece in the air and catches it. He goes offstage to the door.)* Trick or treat! Let's see what you got. *(Beat.)* Ah, don't look at me like that. I said it first, that means you give me the candy. Ooh, Nutter Butter. Alright, you kids be safe. Don't take anything with a razor blade in it. *(Decker enters with all kinds of bite size Halloween candy, Nutter Butter included. He calls off to Black.)* You like Baby Ruth, right?

*(Black enters. He wears a makeshift Priest outfit covered in pea soup.)*

BLACK: Too much soup?

DECKER: I thought you were going all out?

BLACK: This is incredibly imaginative I'll have you know.

DECKER: It's incredibly retarded is what it is. I went as Father Karas last year.

BLACK: Father Karas with a very real case of Crabs, not pea soup.

DECKER: Same thing.

BLACK: You really think it's not good enough?

DECKER: You want the promotion, right?

BLACK: Of course.

DECKER: You said it yourself; your boss always gives a promotion to the employee with the most original costume. You gotta come at him harder than that. Now get in there and keep working. *(Black huffs and returns to the bedroom.)* How old are these jell-o shots?

BLACK: From last night, dipshit.

DECKER: Still good then... probably.

*(Decker takes a few shots.)*

BLACK: I wouldn't take 'em though. They've been sitting out.

*(A huge shiver runs through Decker. He shakes it off.)*

DECKER: Nah, they work. Hey uh, is Dana going to be at this thing?

BLACK: Probably.

DECKER: Don't give me that probably bullshit. You *probably* already know what she's going as.

BLACK: *(Peeking his head in.)* A combination of Little Bo Peep and Carrie.

DECKER: That's twisted. Are you fucking ready yet?

BLACK: Uno momento.

*(Decker finds the digital camera on the table.)*

DECKER: Are you taking your camera?

BLACK: I don't know. Why?

*(Decker pulls his pants forward and begins taking pictures of his penis.)*

DECKER: Just curious.

BLACK: Why? You want to take pictures of your penis with it

DECKER: No.

*(Decker takes pictures of his wet chest.)*

BLACK: Your fake tits then?

DECKER: Mind your business.

*(Black enters in a one piece pajama and a long blonde wig.)*

BLACK: They're heeere.

*(Decker stares at Black. He looks to the offstage door.)*

DECKER: Who?

BLACK: The demons.

DECKER: I didn't hear anybody knock.

BLACK: No... "They're heeere." Like the girl in "Poltergeist." Carol Anne.

DECKER: Where did you get that wig?

BLACK: Your closet.

DECKER: Keep trying. *(Black goes back into the room.)* If you don't come back with something strong this time you can have my costume. This fuckers can't miss.

BLACK: Pass.

*(There is a knock at the offstage door.)*

DECKER: We don't have any candy! *(Another knock.)* Get lost you little bastards! *(He pops another jell-o shot. There is another knock. Decker storms to the door.)* I fucking told you we don't have any... *(Offstage.)* Whoa, that's a serious getup brother. It looks legit. Oww, watch it. Oww, what the fuck? *(Decker is pushed back on-stage by DEATH. Decker is bleeding in two places. Death carries his trademark scythe and wears the black robe.)* That really hurts. *(He calls off to Black.)* Hey Black?

## DUDE LOOKS LIKE A LADY

### **Characters:**

DUDE BROADBONE - A reputable Porn Star.

ROWENNA SMILES - A very sexy woman wanting to break into mainstream porn.

SCOTT - Dude's assistant.

CASSANDRA - Another reputable female Porn Star.

*(All that is on stage is a couch. They type of couch does not matter, but you should be able to get it on! ROWENNA is sitting on the couch alone. She has a compact mirror out and an electric razor, she is shaving her face. She is waiting for her audition for the porn film- "Broadbone's Backdoor Party 37." SCOTT enters to make sure she is ready. As he enters the room ROWENNA stops shaving and puts the razor down. They have a bit of an odd moment between them.)*

SCOTT: Hi...

ROWENNA: Hi.

SCOTT: Are you just about ready?

ROWENNA: Yep.

SCOTT: Dude will be just a minute.

*(SCOTT exits to meet DUDE in the hallway.)*

DUDE: *(Offstage)* Scott, who's next!

SCOTT: *(offstage)* Rowenna Smiles.

DUDE: Fine.

SCOTT: There is something different about her.

DUDE: That's nice.

SCOTT: No, I mean she isn't like a...

DUDE: Scott... shut up. I've done this before.

SCOTT: I know Dude, but...

DUDE: Scott... get the fuck away from me. Wait... what's her background?

SCOTT: This is her first professional audition. She says she has wanted to break into the business forever. I don't know why nobody snagged her earlier.

DUDE: Fine. Let's not waste anymore of her time.

*(SCOTT and DUDE enter. DUDE goes to ROWENNA and shakes her hand. He is very suave Porn Star at this point.)*

DUDE: Please to make your acquaintance Ms. Smiles.

ROWENNA: Please, call me Rowenna.

DUDE: Well... Rowenna, do you mind if I sit with you?

ROWENNA: Not at all.

DUDE: Scott, go set up the next girl. But I may be a while.

SCOTT: No prob... but before I go I think you should know...

DUDE: I don't care.

SCOTT: But I thought she was...

DUDE: Just go do something for Christ's sake.

SCOTT: Okay...

*(SCOTT exits.)*

DUDE: Now, Rowenna. You certainly are beautiful.

ROWENNA: Thank you.

DUDE: Do you have a boyfriend?

ROWENNA: No.

DUDE: Well I can hardly believe that.

ROWENNA: Actually I just came out of a relationship.

DUDE: Was it serious?

ROWENNA: I knew it just wasn't right. We were too different.

*(DUDE is sitting very close to ROWENNA. He has his arm around her.)*

DUDE: I want to let you know that every possible girl for one of my films goes through a very thorough screening process.

ROWENNA: That's fine.

DUDE: We just like to make sure that the girls are comfortable.

ROWENNA: I understand.

*(DUDE leans in and gives ROWENNA a little kiss on the lips.)*

DUDE: Does it make you uncomfortable when I do that?

ROWENNA: No.

DUDE: No? So you don't mind if I do it again?

ROWENNA: Not at all.

*(DUDE kisses her again.)*

DUDE: That was nice.

ROWENNA: *(She giggles)* Yeah.

DUDE: Scott tells me that you have wanted to work in adult films for quite some time.

ROWENNA: Oh yes. Since I was little.

DUDE: Is that right. That's unusual.

ROWENNA: It is?

DUDE: Oh yes. Men usually want to do films at a young age, but not too many women.

ROWENNA: Well that's me. I have wanted to do this for as long as I can remember. I signed up with an agency about six years ago and I have been trying to break into films ever since.

DUDE: Six years? And not one job?

ROWENNA: I couldn't figure it out either. I tried everything. Enlarging, working out, shaving, you name it I tried it. Then one day it hit me.

*(SCOTT enters with a camera on a tri-pod, and begins to set it up.)*

DUDE: What hit you?

ROWENNA: All that time I was trying to break into films I couldn't get one job. So I just said screw it and cut my penis off, had that little surgery and started to work my way in as a new man... or woman.

SCOTT: Holy Shit! I knew it!

*(DUDE is speechless. And that is tough for a porn star.)*

ROWENNA: It really was quite an experience.

SCOTT: I'll fucking say! She's a dude, Dude.

DUDE: Ah... Ah...

ROWENNA: Does that camera mean that we are going to do it? Is that part of the screening process.

SCOTT: Usually Dude fucks all the prelims. But...uh...

ROWENNA: But what?

## You're Fired!

*EDDIE, early 30's, sits at a boardroom table.*

EDDIE

Well, Sir, admittedly we had a bad quarter. The economy is in a constant state of flux. These are the worst numbers since The Great Depression. Our state has been offered stimulus money, but the Governor has refused it. *(Beat. He watches his adversaries.)* Please don't fire me! I haven't done anything wrong. In fact, if you look at all the sorry fuckers I work with, I've really achieved. I've really stood by the company. I backed all your plays. *(He feels their judgment.)* I just had a baby, you can't fire me. It was a boy... a girl... she might have ADD... and OCD... we tested her in the womb and it didn't look good. My wife is really freaking out. Yesterday all she ate was pickle juice and yams. *(He watches them watch him.)* Okay, you're right, I don't have a kid. I'm not even married. I can see by your faces you already know that. But I could be and I'd need this job to take care of them. To buy baby food, diapers, child proofing shit. *(He ejects up from his chair, sending it flying.)* This is bullshit! Just because you fuckers don't know how to run a company; I've gotta be fired?! Fuck that! You need to be fired Dave. With your late lunches and early tee times. Everyone knows you're fucking that girl from accounting... and she's not even cute. You fuck-wads are gonna fire me?! *(He looks in their eyes. Dropping to his knees.)* Okay seriously... you can't downsize me. What am I gonna do? I've got student loans up the ass, no savings, I just loaded up my credit card with a new PS3 and a Sixty inch LCD... you think this suit came cheap? If you fire me I've got nowhere to go! I'm gonna have to move in with my parents again! I already owe them

## Man Up!

*COACH PARSONS, early 30's, paces back and forth, rubbing his head, removing his hat, wiping his brow. He looks to his team to say something, pauses, passes on that speech. Okay, now he's ready...*

### COACH PARSONS

I know what you're thinking, guys. It's too much. An insurmountable sum. How's a guy of my caliber gonna do what needs to be done to turn the tables? It's not possible. I'm only one person and no one out there is helping me. I can't do it on my own. And you're right! You're all right. No one of you can do it on your own. It's just like my epic troll of a boss, Sharon, says to me all the time – “Win together, lose alone.” Personally I think the bitch just stole a line from LOST and twisted it to suit her needs, but God Bless her. She knows how to push buttons, she knows I love LOST, and she knew that a line like that would get me selling those Gift Cards. My point is... none of you is a winner alone. Thirty-five points is a lot to overcome. Astral Plane, you can't drop passes in the End Zone. You had two catchable balls. If you can touch it you can catch it, son. There's fourteen points right there. *Dolcé*, fumbles are a killer. You can't put the ball down on our own five and let them take it to the house. Another seven. Defense! Marker and Magic, you're the best DB's I got! How you gonna let those receivers score on you? They're making you look like punks! There's the other fourteen. Thirty-five points gentlemen. I know what everyone else is going to say – “They're only ten years old, it's just Pop Warner, they all get a trophy anyway.” Fuck trophy's! That's right, I said it. But don't tell you're parents because I can't afford another lawsuit. (*Beat. He looks them up and down.*) It's not about participation trophies, boys. It's about winning. Some of you are natural winners;