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Suburban Peepshow—First Printing, 2007

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Suburban PEEPSHOW

a play by
James Comtois

Suburban Peepshow was first presented by Nosedive Productions (Pete Boisvert and James Comtois, Artistic Directors) on April 5, 2007, at the Horse Trade Red Room, New York City, with the following cast and credits:

CARNIE BARKER, JACK.....Christopher Yustin
MOTHER.....Leslie E. Hughes
JEREMY.....Marc Landers
BILL.....Zack Calhoon
DIRECTOR, OFFICE GUY 2, THERAPIST....Patrick Shearer
OFFICE GUY 1, ANNOUNCER, POOL GUY..Ben VendenBoom
CHUBBY GUY.....James Comtois
NEW GIRL.....Anna Kull
PLAYWRIGHT.....Anthony Bertram
VOICE.....Pete Boisvert

Directed by: Pete Boisvert

Stage Manager: Stephanie Williams

Assistant Stage Manager: Ben VandenBoom

Fight Choreographer: Qui Nguyen

Set and Props Designer: Lauren DiGiulio

Lighting Designer: Gabe Evansohn

Costume Designer: Hollie Nadel

Sound Designer: Patrick Shearer

Makeup Designer: Cat Johnson

Costume Designer: Stephanie Williams

Producers: Pete Boisvert, James Comtois, Rebecca Comtois, Patrick Shearer, Stephanie Williams

Associate Producer: Marc Landers

SUBURBAN PEEPSHOW

(A CARNIE BARKER enters the stage in front of a closed curtain. He addresses the audience.)

CARNIE BARKER: Welcome. You're interested in the macabre. The grisly. The ghastly. The gruesome. That's why you've come here tonight: to watch the unwatchable, to think the unthinkable. To witness the awful truth about the wanton cruelty that engulfs the world in which we live. Well my friends, you've come to the right place. Tonight, we bring you a sight so shocking, so depraved, that to stare too long would sink even the strongest will into a fit of despairing madness. You're very lucky to have us here with you tonight, since no one should dare view this horrific spectacle unguided. Ladies and gentlemen, young and old, my dear friends, I bring you...The Modern...Suburban...Family!

(The curtain opens to reveal a family of three — MOTHER, the mom; BILL, the dad; and JEREMY, their 15-year-old son — sitting down at the dinner table.)

MOTHER: So, how was school, Jeremy?

JEREMY: It was fine.

MOTHER: Oh, just fine?

JEREMY: I dunno.

BILL: Oh, just leave him alone.

MOTHER: Well, I'm sorry, but I'd like to know what our son is doing and get more than just "dunno."

BILL: Just drop it.

JEREMY: It was fine.

CARNIE BARKER: Witness...the banal conversation! See...the subdued tension and hostility! Look...at the mediocre dinnertime ritual, long-since past its cultural relevance!

BILL: Oh, did I tell you? Jack got laid off today.

MOTHER: Oh, Bill, you're kidding!

BILL: No.

MOTHER: Well, what does this mean?

BILL: Not sure yet. Could actually mean they may give me his job.

MOTHER: Do you think?

BILL: Who's to say?

JEREMY: Who's Jack?

BILL: Oh, you remember Jack, don't you?

JEREMY: No.

BILL: Course you do! We had that Christmas party, he came, brought the cheese platter?

JEREMY: Oh, right.

CARNIE BARKER: Oh, the humanity! I can hardly stand to watch! How much more of this emotional emptiness must I watch before my soul gets crushed?

JEREMY: Can I be excused?

MOTHER: What? Why?

JEREMY: I want to watch TV.

MOTHER: Oh, come on. No. You can sit with your family for ten more minutes. Television can wait.

JEREMY: But mom...

MOTHER: No buts! Sit down and finish your supper.

BILL: Your mother's right. You can go for a few minutes a night without watching that glass teat.

JEREMY: Dad...

CARNIE BARKER: Oh, the utter depravity of it all! Unable to tolerate each other's company for even a half hour!

MOTHER: Is...is the theatre freak still here?

JEREMY: Yeah.

MOTHER: Damn.

BILL: I don't like him.

MOTHER: Just ignore him. He'll go away.

CARNIE BARKER: *(The CARNIE BARKER goes to fridge to find something to eat. Finds a pint of ice cream in the freezer. Takes it.)* How can one bear to watch? Your stomachs must be made of stern stuff, ladies and gentlemen!

JEREMY: He's going through our food.

MOTHER: Jesus Christ.

BILL: Say something.

MOTHER: You say something!

BILL: No, come on. Go say something!

JEREMY: How does he keep getting in here?

BILL: Through the fourth wall.

JEREMY: What?

BILL: Don't worry about it.

CARNIE BARKER: *(Mouth full of ice cream.)* The horror!

MOTHER: I'm...I'm sorry, but...do you mind?

BILL: Seriously.

CARNIE BARKER: What?

MOTHER: No offense, but can you fuck off?

BILL: You're freaking us out.

JEREMY: That's my ice cream.

CARNIE BARKER: So selfish are these vile creatures that they can't even stand to dole out the slightest hint of generosity, since their weak and despicable minds can't contemplate—

MOTHER: Okay, that's it.

(The family gets up, all wielding weapons: MOTHER has a machete, BILL has an axe, and JEREMY has a flail.)

CARNIE BARKER: What? No!

MOTHER: You had your chance. *(They kill him.)* Ah. There. That got rid of them.

JEREMY: What are we gonna do with the body?

BILL: Trophy room?

MOTHER: *(Agreeing.)* Trophy room!

JEREMY: Okay.

MOTHER: Sweetie, you mind?

JEREMY: I'm on it. (*Drags body off. Exits.*)

MOTHER: (*To BILL.*) Honey, I'm gonna help him cut off the extremities.

BILL: Okay, sure.

MOTHER: Can you hold down the fort? (*Exits.*)

BILL: Sure thing, Mother. (*Walks downstage of the curtain, which closes. To the audience.*) Hi there. My name's Bill. I have to say, I'm really upset that Jack got laid off. It sucks, it really sucks. He may not have been the best worker, but he was a really good guy. Fun guy to have a drink with after the workday. Really good sense of humor. I mean, the emails he would send out, I mean, whoo! Funny, funny stuff. But then again, downsizing is the name of the game nowadays. The economy being what it is, you just have to accept that it's an adapt or die kind of world. And I'm not going to lie, as sad as I am to see him gone, this may mean that I'll be getting that promotion a little faster than expected. Okay, I'll admit it. I've been wanting his job for months now. Can you blame me? I mean, more money for less work, who wouldn't want that? I need to make a certain amount each year to keep my head above water. Plus, I've got a family. Jack didn't. I don't know what that was about. After all, I think he was older than me. Maybe he was gay? Or maybe he had some sort of weird sick S&M fetish. You know, I think that's probably it. And that's probably why they let him go. My boss can only put up with a sicko in their midst for so long before they say, "enough is enough." And that's why he laid him off instead of firing him, since he didn't want to cause a scandal and let it be known that he hired a dress-wearing, panty-sniffing child-molesting pervert. That's what happened, I'm sure. Repugnant deviant. It's about time my boss did something about Jack and his kind. We can't have people like Jack running around willy-nilly spreading sickness and filth. The guy made my skin crawl, to tell the truth. Always felt uncomfortable sharing his oxygen. It's almost unbearable to think that this social deviant who likes to lock up semi-clad women in his basement was getting paid so much at work for doing so little. And I think it's great that my boss has finally seen that a good upstanding citizen and father and family man such as myself be given the credit I so richly deserve with this promotion. After all, those Excel spreadsheets—

(*MOTHER re-enters, holding the CARNIE BARKER'S severed head.*)

MOTHER: Oh, sorry to interrupt, sweetie, but where do you want this severed head?

BILL: Oh, leave it on the desk in the trophy room, hon. I want it mounted, but I'll stuff it tomorrow.

MOTHER: Okay. *(Exits.)*

BILL: *(Resumes talking to audience.)* After all, those Excel spreadsheets don't email themselves! With that werewolf Jack out of the picture, someone's gotta do it! I think the first thing I do when I get this promotion is buy an in-ground swimming pool. Jeremy will like that. And maybe get the missus some new dishtowels. She's been talking about the old ones getting a little too ragged. It's the most I can do. Maybe even get her a banana hammock or an olive de-pitter. Yeah, that'll make dinner more interesting! Then, I think I should invest in some hedge funds, since they—

(The DIRECTOR enters.)

DIRECTOR: —I'm...I'm sorry. I'm gonna have to stop you there. The carnie barker was right. You...you're really not interesting.

BILL: I'm not?

DIRECTOR: No, not at all. It sounds like you have a pretty shitty job, and no one wants to hear about it. Not only that, no one wants to see where you work, and with your monologue, you're giving the audience the idea that we're going to have a scene that takes place in your office. And...I'm not about to show that.

BILL: But...there's some funny things that happen in offices.

DIRECTOR: *(Incredulous.)* Really?

BILL: Sure! You've seen "Office Space," right?

DIRECTOR: Yeah but...so has everyone here.

BILL: Oh. Well...my boss...he's really quite a character. You should meet him—

DIRECTOR: —And lemme guess. You're the funniest guy in the office.

BILL: Well...that's what everyone says.

DIRECTOR: Uh...huh. Look. *(Hands BILL a gladiator costume.)* Put this on.

BILL: What? Why?

DIRECTOR: I'm the director. Do as I say.

BILL: Ok...kay. *(Looking at the costume.)* It looks a little gay.

DIRECTOR: It's theatre. It's all a little gay.

BILL: Fine. *(Exits with costume.)*

DIRECTOR: *(To the audience.)* I was just kidding. The next scene does take place in an office. I'm not really the director. I'm really one of his co-workers. I just didn't want him holding up my big scene. *(Exits behind the curtain.)*

(Curtain opens to reveal an office. TWO OFFICE GUYS are sitting at their desks, chatting. Note: OFFICE GUY 2 is the director from the previous scene. Music stops.)

OFFICE GUY 1: You know what's a good movie? "Cadence."
Yeah. That's a good movie. I like that. I like that a lot. You know what else is a good movie? "Young Guns." Yeah, yeah. That's a good movie. A good movie. You know what other movie is good? "Major League." Yeah. That's a good movie. Funny movie. I like that. I like that a lot. But you know what's not such a good movie? "Major League II." No. That's not a very good movie. I don't like it. Not as good as "Major League." That's a good movie.

OFFICE GUY 2: You know what I don't like?

OG 1: What?

OG 2: Plays.

OG 1: No.

OG 2: Don't like them.

OG 2: They're not good.

OG 2: Don't care for them.

OG 1: Me, neither.

OG 2: Don't care for them at all.

OG 1: Not at all.

OG 2: Sucks about Jack.

OG 1: Who's Jack?

OG 2: The guy from accounting.

OG 1: What happened to him?

OG 2: Got laid off.

OG 1: That's too bad.

OG 2: Wonder who's gonna email those Excel sheets.

OG 1: Hadn't thought about that!

OG 2: After all, those Excel spreadsheets don't email themselves!

OG 1: That's true.

OG 2: Maybe they'll give that guy Bill the promotion.

OG 1: What guy?

OG 2: You know. Bill. That good upstanding citizen and father and family man.

OG 1: Oh, right.

OG 2: He richly deserves a promotion.

OG 1: Well, he's got to buy an in-ground swimming pool for his kid.

OG 2: And let's not forget dishtowels for the missus.

OG 1: She's been talking about the old ones getting a little too ragged.

OG 2: Indeed.

OG 1: Hey, you know what else is a good movie? "Hot Shots."
Yeah. That's a good movie. I like that. I like that a lot.

(BILL comes crashing into the office, dressed as a Roman gladiator.)

BILL: A-HA! *(He stabs OFFICE GUY 1 and kills him.)*

OG 2: Good Lord! Williamus!

BILL: Come! We haven't much time! We must escape this evil place before they trap us with more mundane tasks and witless patter!

OG 2: Evil?

BILL: You must have sensed the impending doom that such an oppressive institution as this has in store for our souls?

OG 2: But...

BILL: We need to escape while there's still time! And I've found an escape route! Come with me and we can be free!

OG 2: But what about the inter-office memo that promised cupcakes in the break room to welcome the New Girl in accounting!

BILL: There's no time for that! We must ride!

OG 2: There's no time for cupcakes?

BILL: It won't be long before our enemy...cupcakes?

OG 2: In the break room.

BILL: Well...maybe we can have just one.

OG 2: We don't want to be rude.

BILL: No, we should at least say hi to the New Girl.

OG 2: She's new in town.

BILL: Exactly.

OG 2: You think she's seeing anybody?

BILL: Well, it's a moot point for me. I'm married.

OG 2: Right.

BILL: Okay, one cupcake.

OG 2: *(Agreeing.)* One.

BILL: Then we ride.

OG 2: Then we're free!

BILL: Free! *(They exit. Curtain closes. Triumphant music of some sort plays.)*

ANNOUNCER. *(Off-stage.)* And now, for your amusement, and to buy the stagehands some time, we present...CHUBBY GUY DANCING!

(A CHUBBY GUY enters, takes off his shirt and dances around, not unlike the Truffle Shuffle™, to very silly music.)

ANNOUNCER. Thank you, Chubby Guy! *(CHUBBY GUY, a bit sweaty, bows, and then exits.)*

(Curtain opens on an office break room. OFFICE GUY 2 and BILL, still dressed as a gladiator, are eating cupcakes with the NEW GIRL. Note: the tone of NEW GIRL and BILL'S conversation should be very natural and realistic: pleasant, yet awkward in that flirty sort of way.)

NEW GIRL: Hi.

BILL: Hi.

NEW GIRL: So how long have you been with the company?

BILL: Oh, far too long, far too long.

NEW GIRL: Oh, jeez.

BILL: No, I'm just kidding. It's not too bad, it's not too bad. Better part of a decade, actually.

NEW GIRL: Really?

BILL: Yeah. Jeez, has it been that long? *(Nervous laughter from both.)*

NEW GIRL: Wow.

BILL: Yeah.

NEW GIRL: Well...everyone here seems so nice, I'm actually glad to get this job.

BILL: Oh, good, good. Where were you before this?

NEW GIRL: Actually, I used to be an event coordinator.

BILL: Really?

NEW GIRL: Yeah, yeah, so...

BILL: Big change.

NEW GIRL: Big change, yes. *(Nervous laughter.)* Yes, exactly.

BILL: So what made you...?

NEW GIRL: Oh, I had just been doing it for years, and figured, I don't know, I just...

BILL: Needed a change of scenery?

NEW GIRL: Yes, exactly.

BILL: Wow. Well, good for you.

NEW GIRL: Thanks.

BILL: Good for you.

OG 2: Hey man. I gotta head back.

BILL: Back to the grind?

OG 2: Yeah, yeah. Gotta file those 3X-2 Reports.

BILL: Gotcha. Well, don't stay here too late.

OG 2: Right, right. *(To NEW GIRL.)* Well, welcome aboard!

NEW GIRL: Thank you. Nice meeting you.

OG 2: Same here. See you guys. *(Exits.)*

BILL: 'Bye.

NEW GIRL: *(Indicating gladiator outfit.)* Well, this...this is an interesting outfit you've got here.

BILL: Yeah, this? Yeah, well, this is just, this is just something I found...

NEW GIRL: *(Laughing nervously.)* Right.

BILL: ...you know, laundry day, casual Friday.

NEW GIRL: *(Laughing.)* Casual Friday, right right, exactly.

BILL: So...

NEW GIRL: Yeah. No, it's cool, I dig it.

BILL: Yeah?

NEW GIRL: Yeah, it's funky. You know.

BILL: Oh, thanks.

NEW GIRL: Yeah.

BILL: So, you're new in town?

NEW GIRL: *(Giggling.)* Yeah.

BILL: Well...if you ever need...you know...if you ever want a tour guide, let me know. I know how hard it can be adjusting to a new place.

NEW GIRL: Oh. Thank you.

BILL: Sure.

NEW GIRL: I should stop eating these cupcakes.

BILL: Yeah?

NEW GIRL: Gonna make me fat.

BILL: I find that hard to believe.

NEW GIRL: *(Giggling.)* Oh, stop...

(The curtain closes. NEW GIRL moves downstage in front of the curtain and addresses the audience.)

NEW GIRL: Now many of you may be wondering just what the hell I was thinking to go from a very lucrative self-employing career to a job where I'm just a cog in a giant corporate wheel. Well, lemme tell you, I hated my previous job. I hated my career. It sucked. It was just as empty and as soul-sucking as any job at an office, trust me. And the self-employment thing? Yeah, the novelty of being your own boss is great for about a minute. Then you realize it's absolute feast or famine when it comes to your next paycheck. And the hours were just insane. There were times I was working 14-hour days, six days a week with no paycheck in sight for six, maybe seven weeks. No thank you. And to top it off, honestly, I wanted to be around people. I mean, sure I was around people as an event coordinator, but it was always new people who disappeared after the event was done. People came and went in my life without making much of an impression. Which made me realize, I was making no impression on anyone. I mean, sure, the manager of a company would be impressed with my ability to organize their semi-annual power-luncheon, but I'd be surprised if said manager would remember my name 24 hours later. *(Throughout the remainder of this monologue, she removes some of her clothing and rumples up her hair.)* I really just wanted a steady paycheck, steady interaction with people, and a regulated schedule. So, here I am. *(Pause.)* The people at this office do seem pretty nice. Especially Bill. I really liked him. He made me feel so comfortable, so at home, he made any nervousness about joining the company go away. And he wasn't kidding about being a tour guide! That really was very nice of him. A couple days after we met, he invited me to join him at this restaurant on Elm Street. Pretty good Italian food, which surprised me for such a...well, let's face it...backwater town. He also pointed out where the best grocery marts were, where the good coffee shop in town was, showed me how to get to the local movie theatre, all that stuff. Bill's such a good listener, too. I'm really amazed at how understanding he is. He really made these first few weeks in town fly by.

(The curtain opens to reveal a motel room. BILL is putting his gladiator outfit back on as NEW GIRL lies in bed.)

NEW GIRL: You have to go?

BILL: Yeah, yeah. Gotta go. I need to get back home in time before they start to notice.

NEW GIRL: Okay.

BILL: Is that okay?