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Cover art by Anna Cosper

Darker

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Trade Edition, 2013

ISBN 978-1-63092-006-7

Also Available from OWP

ATROCIOUS TRADITIONS

By Erica Griffin

Featuring:

INBRED

1 Male, 2 Females

Synopsis: Catch (30's), an aspiring musician, in playing in a cover band in Boulder City, Nevada. When a strange but beautiful, and very drunk young groupie named Alice (20's) brings him home to an off-road shack near the base of Hoover Dam, Catch suddenly finds himself caught in a strange reality... a reality where a mentally retarded girl named Daphne (20's) is routinely abused by her sister Alice in order to make sense of their parents incestuous love affair and double suicides. Catch faces his own insecurities as his passion for Alice fizzles and his compassion for Daphne grows.

INTACT

2 Males, 1 Female

Synopsis: Mavis (40's), an artist, has almost finished her nude portrait of Riot (20's), a model, in her Las Vegas garage/art studio, but has run into a problem now that he has disrobed completely. When she calls her son Lyle (20's), who works in the costume shop at UNLV, in for a second opinion, Lyle is instantly attracted to Riot. Of course Lyle hasn't taken his meds, and when Mavis wants to go out and celebrate with Riot, Lyle's attraction takes a fatal turn... he comes up with an artistic solution of his own.

Darker

By

Catie O'Keefe

Characters:

All characters are mid-twenties to mid-thirties and can be played by any race or ethnicity.

- MAX
- LUCY
- TOM

Set:

- The Industri-Bulb office, a light bulb distribution center.
- A street corner
- The dark

Time:

Present

Production History:

A shorter version of *Darker* was performed in London as part of First Draft Theatre's April Shower Collection in 2010. Later that year, a longer version was re-mounted for its own performance run at First Draft Theatre. In 2011 *Darker* had its US premiere with New Edgecliff Theatre as part of the Cincinnati Fringe Festival.

Original US Production

Director—Illana Stein

MAX—Michael Carr

LUCY—Mindy Heithaus

TOM—Jeffrey Miller

Note: / means a character starts talking during the line above.

For Joe

Darker

Scene 1

(The dark. A light bulb comes on somewhere in the dark. Then it goes out. Another one comes on and then goes out. Another and another go out until finally all but one bulb remains on. One random light bulb dangles center stage or perhaps a bit stage left. Voices are heard in the darkness.)

LUCY: I'm about to change your life. Are you ready for something like that?

MAX: No, I don't think it's that simple.

LUCY: Turn the lights on.

MAX: No, I'm not ready.

LUCY: I want you to be able to see me.

MAX: I dreamt about you last night.

TOM: I know, I dreamt about you too.

(Pause.)

MAX: It's raining today and there are no airplanes in the sky.

LUCY: I wouldn't expect there to be. Not on a day like today-

TOM: I see lights – two lights – and, and...

TOM: Wake up.

MAX: No, I'm not/

TOM: /wake up.

(Light bulb goes out.)

Scene 2

(Lights up on full stage. The Industri-Bulb office, with three desks. One very important desk is Center Stage. LUCY sits at the important desk. TOM sits at another less important desk. LUCY files her nails. MAX enters looking lost from a door up stage left.)

MAX: Excuse me? Is this Industri-Bulb?

LUCY: Who wants to know?

MAX: It's me, Max Horn, we spoke the phone, I think. You and I, we were on the phone, and you asked me to come in for an interview. I think. Did you ask me for an interview?

LUCY: Max Horn, fantastic. Have a seat.

TOM: I'm going to get the mail.

(TOM gets up from his desk and leaves.)

LUCY: Max Horn, it's great to meet you. I'm Lucy Jenkins.

(They shake hands.)

LUCY: So why do you want to work for Industri-Bulb?

MAX: I don't know. You called me, I think.

(Silence)

LUCY: Hm. Well, I think you may have what we're looking for in a sales rep. How would you like a position here in this very office?

MAX: That would be nice, yes.

LUCY: Can you start now?

MAX: You mean this week?

LUCY: I mean now. Can you start in like, (*She looks at her watch*) thirty seconds?

MAX: Well I haven't brought a lunch for today-

LUCY: We have a cafeteria. It's on a point system. I'll have some points credited to you.

MAX: Okay then.

LUCY: Excellent. Max Horn, where would you like to sit?

MAX: How about here?

LUCY: No. I'm sorry, that's my desk.

MAX: Here?

LUCY: That's Tom's desk. (*Pause.*) Just move his stuff out of the way.

MAX: I can pick another-

LUCY: Don't be silly, he's gone to get the mail.

MAX: Well if you think-

(TOM walks back into the room with letters in hand.)

TOM: What do you think you're doing?

LUCY: Tom, this is Max. He's new here, just started actually, and he's going to be sitting at your desk.

TOM: Excuse me?

LUCY: Tom, I don't want to hear it. Go get some points from the cafeteria for Max. His last name is Horn.

MAX: I can move to a different desk.

TOM: Yes, you most certainly can!

LUCY: Ridiculous. Tom! Points! Time is money!

TOM: I'll be back.

(TOM leaves the room.)

LUCY: There, you see? You will fit in just fine.

(Long pause between them.)

MAX: Do I know you?

LUCY: Do you?

MAX: I think I've had a dream about you.

LUCY: Maybe déjà vu?

MAX: Maybe.

LUCY: Have you ever wanted something to happen so badly that it did and then you wondered if you had some magical power and could control the destiny of everything?

MAX: No.

LUCY: (*Sighs*) It happens you know? I really wanted you to work here – and now, see, here you are. (*Pause.*) When Tom comes back with your points, you are free to go to lunch.

MAX: But I haven't started work yet...

LUCY: /then it will be an easy day for you Max Horn. Job interview and a lunch break. What a way to earn money!

MAX: Yes.

LUCY: Well?

MAX: Well what?

LUCY: What do you say?

MAX: Uh, thanks.

LUCY: It's no sweat Max. A valuable employee
like you, you're worth it.

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(Lights up on the office at night. A desk lamp is switched on. MAX sits at the desk working diligently. After a while LUCY comes in and watches him. He doesn't see her until she speaks.)

LUCY: You're still here? It's late.

MAX: Couldn't sleep.

LUCY: I know how you feel. Sometimes I think about work so much that I forget about the world outside.

MAX: I like the company. It seems like a good one.

LUCY: I think you'll do well here.

(Pause.)

MAX: Are you sure we haven't met?

LUCY: Still déjà vu-ing?

MAX: Can one say that? Déjà vu-ing?

LUCY: At Industri-Bulb we praise creativity.

MAX: It's just- I don't think/

LUCY: /what? That it's not a word?

MAX: No.

LUCY: Open that mind up a little bit Max. Explore your possibilities.

MAX: I'm trying Lucy, really. I don't want to let you down; I just feel like I'm in a bit of a haze.

LUCY: It's the lighting in here. It's horrible.

MAX: Ironic, isn't it?

LUCY: What?

MAX: That the lighting in a lighting company is inadequate.

LUCY: Oh yes. It's funny really. *(She gives a bit of a fake giggle.)*

MAX: What are *you* doing here?

LUCY: I forgot something at my desk.

MAX: Oh.

LUCY: Your life is about to change completely. Are you ready for that?

MAX: What did you say?

LUCY: I said, sometimes I bring home the order catalogue to check my work before I go to bed.

MAX: Right.

LUCY: Well Max Horn, I hope you have a pleasant night.

MAX: You too.

LUCY: Don't let the bedbugs bite. See you tomorrow.

MAX: Can I ask you something?

LUCY: Yes.

MAX: Are you who I think you are?

(Pause.)

LUCY: I'm that girl who stands by the water fountain wanting him to come say hello. I'm that girl that stays awake at night thinking about him. I'm that girl who dreams of a man who looks similar to you and then convinces herself it's you when she wakes up. I'm the girl who doesn't say what's on her mind. I'm the girl who talks too much. I'm the girl who lost her heart in second grade to a boy named Robby and who lost her virginity at twenty-five to the postman. I'm that girl you never thought you'd meet because it would just complicate things. *(Pause.)* If that's who you think I am, then you're right. Goodnight Max Horn.

MAX: Goodnight girl.

(Lights out.)

Scene 4

(Lights up. MAX is asleep at his desk. TOM and LUCY enter laughing.)

TOM: Sleeping on the job, are we?

LUCY: He must have been here all night.

TOM: Max!

LUCY: No, Tom don't. Let him sleep, he was obviously working hard.

TOM: *(Sarcastically)* I wonder why he would do that?

LUCY: Just let him sleep a bit.

TOM: He's already your favorite.

LUCY: I don't have favorites.

TOM: I hate it when you lie.

LUCY: You're just jealous.

TOM: You're just crazy.

(Pause.)

(TOM slams his hand down on MAX's desk.)

TOM: Wake up!

(MAX jumps.)

MAX: What? Oh- oh no. I'm so-

(TOM laughs and LUCY rolls her eyes.)

LUCY: I'm sorry duckling-

MAX: I must have fallen- I'm so sorry, am I late?

TOM: Late for what?

LUCY: You're at work.

MAX: Did you just call me duckling?

LUCY: No.

TOM: Sorry man, I couldn't resist.

MAX: Yes, well now everyone's had a good laugh,
I'm going to get to work.

LUCY: You are at work.

TOM: You're already here; slept here it looks like.

MAX: That's odd.

LUCY: He's a dedicated little soldier and you should make a note Tom. This is bonus material. Max why don't you go make yourself some breakfast; get a cup of coffee or something.

MAX: But work-

LUCY: /will wait. (*Pause.*) I'm telling you, it will
wait for you.

(*Lights out.*)

Scene 5

(MAX is on the phone.)

MAX: Uh huh, yes. October 27th. 9pm. Purple. No, violet.

(While MAX is on the phone, TOM is trying to get his attention He tries by making 'eyes' at him and then snapping his fingers. He finally builds a paper airplane and tries to get his attention but it flies past him towards LUCY who is working at her desk and doesn't notice.)

MAX: Male. One hundred and ninty-two pounds. Forgetfulness. Kingston. Two brothers and one sister. Youngest of the family. Heart disease and bone cancer. 82. Dead. Dead. Dead. Dead. Still living, uh somewhere in Texas. I don't have that information. I don't know that either. I'm not really sure but I slept here last night. A cat, maybe. The details are fuzzy. Single. 20-20, but I do have a hearing problem, maybe. And did I mention forgetfulness and maybe memory loss? I can't be too sure.

(Finally TOM decides to call MAX on the phone.)

MAX: Can you hold for a moment? I have another call coming in. Thanks. Hello?

TOM: It's Tom.

MAX: Tom?

TOM: Don't say my name.

MAX: Okay, Uh, Jerry?

TOM: Good. Can you meet me later?

MAX: Yeah, okay.

TOM: Good. See you then.

MAX: Okay. Bye.

TOM: Bye.

(Pause. MAX looks at TOM who motions him to look away. MAX averts his gaze and picks up the other phone call.)

MAX: Sorry about that, where were we?

(Lights out.)

Scene 6

(Lights up on a park bench outside in the cold. TOM waits all bundled up. MAX approaches from behind him.)

MAX: Tom? Is that you?

TOM: *(Turning to MAX)* Yes.

MAX: I'm sorry I'm late-

TOM: Thanks for meeting me here Max. There's so much I need to talk to you about.

MAX: Are you sure we can take this time off work?

TOM: Are you worried about what Lucy will say?

MAX: No. I just-

TOM: Look, you don't know her. She's not what you think she is.

MAX: I think she's a nice woman.

TOM: That's a lie. You don't actually think that.

MAX: I don't understand.

TOM: You wouldn't; you just started. She's done this before, you know? To other men in the office, other men who've taken my desk.

MAX: Done what?

TOM: Oh Max, you have the mind of a child.

MAX: Tom... if I've done anything to offend you, I'm sorry. *(Pause.)* Is this about your desk? I'd be happy to give you your desk back.

TOM: It's not about the stupid desk.

MAX: Then-

TOM: Look, just stay away from her.

MAX: Who-

TOM: If you want to survive this time, then stay away from her.

MAX: What do you mean? I don't think she's half as bad as you say she is-

TOM: /you don't know her like I know her. She'll whisper things into your head when you're asleep so when you wake up you'll think they're real.

(TOM walks away. MAX is left standing alone.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 7

(The dark. A light bulb comes on somewhere in the dark. Then it goes out. Same as the first scene until one is on and voices are heard.)

LUCY: What do you think so far?

MAX: Hello?

LUCY: I mean, is it what you expected?

MAX: Have I been here before?

LUCY: I did miss you. You know, I take it all back-

TOM: She's lying. Don't trust her.

MAX: I wish there was more light-

LUCY: Then open your eyes-

TOM: Wake up!

MAX: No- I'm not ready.

TOM: I miss you too, you know?

MAX: No, I'm not ready.

LUCY: Then we wait.

(Light bulb out.)

Scene 8

(Lights up on the office. TOM, MAX and LUCY all sit at their respective desks. TOM's phone rings.)

TOM: *(Into phone)* This is Tom. Yes, Tom Wallace. Yes, this is he. Can I help you with something? Hold, please.

LUCY: *(To MAX)* He's going to ask you a question.

MAX: Sorry?

TOM: *(To MAX)* Max? Max Horn? Can you tell me how many light bulbs we have in stock at this very moment?

MAX: Uh...

TOM: Quickly, time is money.

MAX: Five thousand twenty one. *(Pause.)* But that's just in this warehouse. Including the neighboring stores we have twenty thousand four hundred and three.

TOM: *(Taken aback)* Very good... for the new guy.

LUCY: You've impressed Tom. That's not easy to do.

TOM: *(Back on the phone)* Did you get all of that? Yes. Well, what color then? I see. *(He writes*

something on a pad of paper.) Then it's settled. We'll call you when they come in. (*He hangs up*).

LUCY: Well done pet.

TOM: (*Smiling*) Thank you Lucy. That's almost all the revenue we need for December.

MAX: Pet?

LUCY: Oh, don't be like that. I always have little names for you boys. It's how we get along you see.

MAX: I wasn't implying-

LUCY: /good, because I wasn't inferring.

TOM: Lunch anyone?

MAX: I'm going to wait.

LUCY: I would love lunch Tom. Are we using your points today? I'm afraid I'm all out.

TOM: For you Lucy...

LUCY: Oh dear. (*She blushes*)

MAX: I'll stay here then. (*Long pause where both LUCY and TOM stare at him*) If that's okay? I'll stay here and mind the phones.

LUCY: *(Comes over to MAX and sits provocatively on the edge of his desk. She half whispers.)* Max? Dear little ignorant Max. There are things in this world of which you do not understand. For example, you have the memory of an elephant, which serves you well here at the company. And I've got- I've got *(She glances back at TOM who is waiting by the door.)* Well never you mind – we'll talk when Tom goes home.

MAX: I uh-

LUCY: No, it's not up for discussion. We'll have a little one on one time alone Max, just you and me.

(LUCY gets up and leaves. MAX watches her go.)

MAX: Well.

(Lights out.)

Scene 9

(The dark. LUCY and MAX are heard.)

LUCY: Back for more?

MAX: Back? I haven't left yet.

LUCY: You're always leaving and it upsets me so.
It upsets me so much that sometimes I do things
that I really shouldn't do.

MAX: Who are you?

LUCY: You already figured that out.

MAX: But Tom said-

LUCY: This doesn't concern him.

MAX: He said that you've done this before.

LUCY: I give free points to all the new employees.

MAX: Not that. *(Pause.)* Have I worked here before?

LUCY: Not that I can remember. But my memory's
not always so good these days. I had an accident
a while back and I lost some of the memories you
know?

MAX: Have we ever been in love?

LUCY: Such a loaded question. I think that's
enough for one day.

MAX: Was I in love with you before?

TOM: Wake up!

Scene 10

(Lights up on the office. TOM stands over MAX tapping him lightly on the shoulder.)

TOM: Wake up Max.

(MAX slowly comes to. He's been asleep at his desk.)

MAX: Oh, I've been dreaming about work.

TOM: You mean you've been dreaming while at work.

MAX: Yes, I suppose. Where's Lucy?

TOM: She's gone for the afternoon. Meetings all day, client affairs.

MAX: Affairs?

TOM: She's very busy.

MAX: Yes, I know. She's never around.

TOM: She's very busy.

MAX: Yes, I know, you said that.

TOM: Alright then, back to work.

MAX: What if I wanted to take a holiday?

TOM: A what?

MAX: A vacation somewhere. Are we allowed a vacation?

TOM: If you work for a month straight then you can have two days off.

MAX: Is that right?

TOM: It is.

MAX: Hm. *(Thinking)*

TOM: Do you think you'd like a... holiday?

MAX: I'm thinking so, yes.

TOM: Then talk it over with Lucy.

MAX: Why Lucy?

TOM: Because she has to approve all the time off.

MAX: Oh. *(Relieved)* I thought maybe you meant-

TOM: /no, I didn't mean that.

MAX: I realize now.

(Long silence. TOM starts to walk over to his desk when MAX stops him.)

MAX: Tom?

TOM: Max?

MAX: Tom? Have I worked here before?

TOM: What sort of question is that?

MAX: An honest one. I can't remember.

TOM: You think you would remember working at a place like this before, wouldn't you?

MAX: Well, I do know a lot about light bulbs, more than the average person should ever know about light bulbs. And you...

TOM: What about me?

MAX: Wasn't this your desk here?

TOM: Yes, but that was my desk when you started here. She gave it to you, remember?

MAX: Did I take your desk?

TOM: You took more than that.

MAX: What does that mean? What did I do to you?

TOM: (*Shaking his head*) Stole my heart.

MAX: What?

TOM: One of these days you're going to get it all back you know?

MAX: Okay, be sure to let me know when that's going to happen.

TOM: Soon I think.

(LUCY walks into the office and sees the two men.)

LUCY: You two! Behave yourselves.

MAX: Lucy, you're back.

LUCY: Yes, what did you expect? I do work here after all.

MAX: But Tom said-

TOM: I said that she was coming back after lunch, just as she always does.

LUCY: Oh Tom, you're so sweet.

MAX: Tom likes men you know?

(Both LUCY and TOM look at him rather confused.)

TOM: Excuse me?

MAX: He, ummm, he likes men, is all.

LUCY: Well who doesn't like men? *(To MAX)* I know I do.

MAX: Yes, but he's- I think he was flirting-

TOM: What are you getting at?

MAX: Nothing. Sorry. I need to go to lunch.

TOM: I'd say so.

(MAX starts to pack up his coat and things).

LUCY: Everything alright, Max?

MAX: Yeah- just need some fresh air.

TOM: Max would like to take a vacation. Can you let him take a holiday?

LUCY: He's only been here for three days. I don't think that's company policy.

TOM: Maybe you could make an exception.

LUCY: I'll consider it.

MAX: Excuse me. I have to leave.

(MAX finishes grabbing his things and heads for the door.)

MAX: I'll be back in an hour- I think.

(Lights out.)