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*Onions*

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## Also Available from OWP

### Killed A Man In Reno

by Robin Hack

3 Males, 1 Female

**Synopsis:** Kurt and Julie Lawry travel to Reno, Nevada for a wild weekend. The biggest little city in the world doesn't have all the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas, but it is able to offer its own "unique" activities. As soon as Kurt and Julie arrive in their room, the trusty hotel concierge is at their service, offering to get show tickets, reserve gaming tables, make dinner reservations, or let them kill a man just to watch him die. *"It is what Reno, Nevada is famous for Mr. Lawry."*

### Knuckleball

by William Whitehurst

1 Male, 1 Female

**Synopsis:** In a moment of passion and intimacy, Ross proposes to his promiscuous lover Trish. She desperately wants to say yes, but cannot. But Ross won't take no for answer—she must either marry him or explain why she won't. She tells an extraordinary tale about who—and what—she really is. But is she telling the truth? And if she is, will the truth destroy these lovers, or save them? *Knuckleball* challenges us to rethink the nature and meaning of love in our contemporary world.

### Suburban Peepshow

by James Comtois

6-8 Males, 2 Females

**Synopsis:** Bill is a husband, father, and professional. But this week, a cross dressing social deviant gets fired at the office and Bill is poised to step into his position. The promotion all but guarantees new dishtowels for the wife, and the in-ground pool for son Jeremy. But a New Girl in the office has designs for Bill, and he ain't gonna pass it up... if you know what I mean. Who can blame him with his wife contemplating jumping the Pool Guy, a strange Carnie Barker interrupting dinner, and the occasion Gladiator battle waiting at home. It all depends on how the Playwright is feeling tonight.

# **ONIONS**

A one act play by

F.J. Hartland

**“Life is like an onion; one peels it crying.”**

--Spanish proverb

CHARACTERS

**AARON**, 40's

**HAZEL**, a nurse, also 40's

**DINAH**, **AARON**'s mother, 70's

## ONIONS

*(Lounge in a nursing home. Night. Enter Aaron, 40's, wearing a coat. He is breathless as if he'd just run a long race—clutches his chest. Enter Hazel, 40's, nursing staff. Overworked and underpaid.)*

AARON: *(Breathless)* Excuse me—

HAZEL: That's the international sign of choking! I'd recognize it anywhere!

AARON: *(Gasping)* No, I—

HAZEL: Never fear! I'm trained in the Heimlich Maneuver! Everyone, clear!

AARON: Everyone?...Who are you talking to?...

*(Hazel dashes across the room and puts her arms around Aaron, who continues to try to protest breathlessly.)*

HAZEL: On the count of three...one...two...three.

*(Hazel pushes in Aaron's mid-section.)*

HAZEL: Nothing? Again. One...two...three!

*(Hazel pushes again.)*

HAZEL: Again. One...two...three.

*(Hazel literally picks Aaron up off the floor with this final maneuver.)*

AARON: Put me down!

*(She does so.)*

AARON: I...was...not...choking.

HAZEL: But you gave the international sign of choking.

*(Hazel demonstrates by clutching her throat.)*

AARON: I...was...not...doing...that.

HAZEL: You most certainly were.

AARON: I'm out...of breath. I was...holding my chest.

HAZEL: I know what I saw.

AARON: I...wasn't...doing that.

HAZEL: That's a fine thing...to come in here and pretend to be choking.

AARON: I was out...of breath...from running...across the...parking lot. I'm here to see someone.

HAZEL: I'm sorry, Sir, visiting hours are over.

AARON: Yes, I know—

*(HAZEL grabs her walkie-talkie from her pocket.)*

HAZEL: This is Nighthawk One. Repeat. Nighthawk One. Security, we have an intruder.

AARON: Please don't call...security.

HAZEL: *(Into walkie-talkie)* Lounge B.

AARON: Really, this...isn't necessary.

HAZEL: *(Into walkie-talkie)* I think I can take him, but send back-up just in case...Over.

AARON: I need to see my mother.

HAZEL: Visiting hours ended at nine.

AARON: Yes, I know—

HAZEL: Then if you know, get here before nine.

AARON: I don't mean to be a bother—

HAZEL: I'm going to be honest with you, Sir. You don't want to challenge me. I've cracked more nuts than the cross bar on a man's bike.

*(Aaron places his hand on his chest.)*

AARON: I'm sorry...but I really need to sit down.

*(Aaron collapses in a nearby chair as Hazel gets on her trusty walkie-talkie again.)*

HAZEL: This is Nighthawk One again. We've got a possible Code Blue in Lounge B.

AARON: This isn't a code...anything...I'm just...out of breath...

HAZEL: *(Into walkie-talkie)* Cancel the Code Blue. Over.

AARON: I told you...I ran...all the way from...the parking lot to get here...before 9.

HAZEL: Well, you wasted your time. You didn't make it.

AARON: Believe me...if it wasn't important...I wouldn't be here.

HAZEL: This has better be a matter of life and death.

AARON: It is.

HAZEL: *(Into walkie-talkie)* This is Nighthawk One again. Cancel Security. It's just a crazy family member. Over.

AARON: Thank you.

HAZEL: Who's your mother?

AARON: Dinah. Dinah Churchill.

HAZEL: Look, Mr. Churchill—

AARON: I'm not Mr. Churchill...I'm Mr. McNeil.

HAZEL: McNeil? Not Aaron McNeil?

AARON: Yes.

HAZEL: I thought you looked familiar.

AARON: I do come once a week to see my mother.

HAZEL: Not from here. We graduated from Polk High School. Remember? Go Panthers!

*(Hazel growls. Aaron looks at her strangely.)*

HAZEL: I'm Hazel.

AARON: Oh.

HAZEL: Hazel Gillooley.

AARON: I'm sorry...

HAZEL: In school they called me "Horseface."

AARON: Horseface Hazel, of course...

*(Catching himself.)*

AARON: Kids can be so cruel.

HAZEL: Kids? It was the teachers! God, I hated high school.

AARON: Me, too.

HAZEL: Hey, remember Norma "No Ankles" Pruitt?

AARON: "Old Sausage Legs," the guidance counselor?

HAZEL: Yeah...she's a patient here now.

AARON: She was the world's worst guidance counselor.

HAZEL: You're telling me? She said I was too stupid for nursing school—I should consider learning the phrase, "Pump Five is on"

AARON: She didn't.

HAZEL: She did! I got her back though. When she buzzes for help, I wait ten minutes before answering. And remember Dewey Dobbs?

AARON: Who could forget an asshole like that? He was in my Chemistry class--kept trying to light his own farts with a Bunsen burner. Whatever became of him?

HAZEL: I married him.

AARON: Oh, sorry.

HAZEL: Hey, if your mother is a client here, how come I've never seen you here before?

AARON: I usually visit during the day...

HAZEL: And that bitch head nurse always schedules me for night shift...

AARON: This is my first night time visit, actually.

HAZEL: Sorry I was so rough on you, Aaron. It's been crazy here. Just this morning I forgot to do three things. I'm surprised I remembered to put on my underwear.

*(Hazel feels herself.)*

HAZEL: Make that four things I forgot to do.

AARON: I hate to be a bother, Hazel, but I really need to see my mother.

HAZEL: What's her name again?

AARON: Dinah. Dinah Churchill.

HAZEL: Why is it she's Churchill and you're McNeil?

AARON: She remarried after my father died. Now, could I see her?

HAZEL: We just got her down for the night...

AARON: Please? As a favor to a former Panther?

*(Aaron growls.)*

HAZEL: She's very difficult to get to bed, let me tell you.

AARON: I know. But just this once?

HAZEL: *(Into walkie-talkie)* Unit B Desk...This is Nighthawk One...  
Dinah Churchill has a visitor...Yes, I know we just got her down for  
the night...Yes, I know how difficult it is to get her to bed...I'll be  
right there for her...Over.

AARON: Thanks, Horse—er—Hazel.

*(Hazel exits. Aaron paces, removes his coat. Sits. Stands. He takes a  
pill bottle from his pocket. Takes one. Hazel wheels Dinah into the  
room. Dinah is in her 60's or 70's and deep in dementia. Dinah is  
singing some song...the dirtier, the better. Perhaps "Roll Me Over in  
the Clover".)*

HAZEL: Here we are...

DINAH: Where is my breakfast?

HAZEL: I told you, Dinah, it isn't morning...

DINAH: But you just woke me up...

HAZEL: Because you have a visitor.

DINAH: Why don't you shut-up? If I wanted to listen to an asshole,  
I'd fart!

AARON: Mother!

*(To Hazel.)*

AARON: I'm sorry. My mother never used to say words like that. She was a very proper lady. My father was a minister.

HAZEL: It's all right—I'm used to it. Look, Dinah, it's your son.

DINAH: *(To AARON)* Who are you?

HAZEL: I just told you...this is your son.

DINAH: Bullshit!

AARON: I'm your son Aaron. Aaron McNeill.

DINAH: I don't give a good God McDamn who you are....

AARON: Remember...I always bring you a chocolate bar?

DINAH: Then where is it?

AARON: I'm sorry, Mother, I don't have one with me today.

DINAH: I want my chocolate bar! I want my chocolate bar NOW!

AARON: I just told you, I don't have one...

DINAH: You aren't my son if you don't have my chocolate bar!

AARON: *(To Hazel)* Anything you can do to help?

*(Hazel reaches into her pocket, pulls out a health bar.)*

HAZEL: All I've got is this fiber bar...

AARON: A fiber bar?

HAZEL: I have a problem with...irregularity.

DINAH: I knew you were full of shit! Where is my chocolate! I want my god damn chocolate!

AARON: Would you mind?

HAZEL: Sure...who cares if I'm constipated?

*(Hazel hands the bar to Aaron, who quickly unwraps it.)*

DINAH: Chocolate! Where is my chocolate?

AARON: Here, Mother, here it is...

*(Aaron hands the unwrapped health bar to Dinah, who devours it quickly—then spits it out.)*

DINAH: This tastes like shit...

AARON: Mother!

DINAH: Screw you and the horse you rode in on!

AARON: *(To HAZEL)* I'm sorry....she never used to be like this.

HAZEL: It bothers you because you remember who your mother used to be...I've never know her any other way.

AARON: Thank you...

DINAH: Who are you?

AARON: I'm your son.

DINAH: My husband and I never had any children.

AARON: Not with your second husband. But you did with your first one. Remember Lloyd McNeill? The minister?

DINAH: That whoremonger!

HAZEL: Now there's a word you don't hear every day. Whoremonger.

AARON: My father was NOT a whoremonger.

DINAH: He never comes to visit me. I think he's got a chippie on the side. That slut!

AARON: (*Starting to lose patience*) He doesn't come to visit because he's been dead for thirty years.

(*Aaron clutches his chest...goes a little off-balance. Hazel catches him.*)

HAZEL: Don't even try arguing with her...you'll only upset yourself.

(*Aaron sits down to talk to Dinah.*)

AARON: Look, Mother, there's something important we have to discuss...

(*Aaron realizes Hazel is still standing there.*)

AARON: If you could excuse us?

HAZEL: Sure. I'll be right over here--twiddling my thumbs--if you need me.

(*Hazel sits across the room. From her pocket, she pulls a piece of bubble wrap. She pops bubbles while Aaron is trying to communicate with Dinah*)

AARON: Look, Mother...

DINAH: I'm not your mother...

AARON: Yes, you are...

DINAH: I'm not going to listen to you...

(*Dinah begins singing some childhood song... "Paddy Cake" or "Pop! Goes the Weasel".*)

AARON: Mother, please...stop singing and listen to me...I have something to tell you...something that you need to know...please...just hear me out...

*(Between the singing and the popping, Aaron can't stand it any longer. He snaps on Hazel.)*

AARON: What the hell are you doing?

HAZEL: Bubble wrap...better than Prozac.

AARON: Could you please stop?

HAZEL: You work for years here and see what kind of little crutches you use to stay sane...

*(Her walkie-talkie beeps. She answers.)*

HAZEL: Nighthawk One here....What?...Again?...All right...I'll be right there. *(To Aaron)* Fourteen million Americans are incontinent. I think they all reside on my wing...

*(Hazel exits.)*

AARON: She seems nice.

DINAH: She's a cunt.

AARON: Mother, that's a terrible thing to say. You shouldn't use language like that.

DINAH: Oh, go fuck yourself...

AARON: I'm not going to let you upset me. There's something I need to talk to you about—

*(Suddenly, Dinah grabs Aaron's arm.)*

DINAH: Take me home.

AARON: What?