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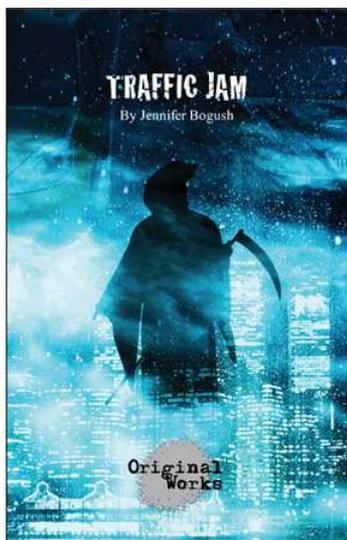
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A Tangled Mess
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Traffic Jam by Jennifer Bogush

Synopsis: TRAFFIC JAM tells the story of Cassie, an absolute train wreck, who waits for Death to arrive in a hospital waiting room. She wishes to assume the mantle of the strong woman in her family, and slay her monster grandfather if Death will not do his job. Cassie is convinced that he is stuck in traffic! She shows her vulnerability to a handsome stranger, Gary, who (like everyone else in her life) betrays her.

Cast Size: 2 Males, 1 Female

A Tangled Mess

**a one act play
by
Stephen Peirick**

A TANGLED MESS

Characters:

Sabrina, “Bree” mid-30s. She wears a fire red wig that is a bit of a mess.

Carrie, late 20s – 30’s, a cosmetologist.

Setting: Sabrina’s living room, present day.

A TANGLED MESS was first produced as a staged reading on July 11, 2013 by Heartland Theatre Company in Normal, Ill., as part of the “New Plays from the Heartland” competition. Directed by Mike Dobbins and Ron Emmons, the opening night cast was as follows:

Sabrina — Karen Hazen
Carrie — Holly Rocke

A TANGLED MESS subsequently opened on August 22, 2013, produced as part of Stray Dog Theatre’s New Works Lab in St. Louis, Mo. in “Complicated Lives: An Evening of Short Plays by Stephen Peirick.” Directed by the playwright, the opening night cast was as follows:

Sabrina — Nancy Nigh
Carrie — Kate Frisina-White

**This play is for my mom, Patricia Rose Peirick:
the strongest woman I've ever known.**

A TANGLED MESS

(The living room of Sabrina's modest house. Around 12:30 in the afternoon on a Thursday. In the darkness, we hear a door unlock. It opens and closes. Lights up as Carrie enters cautiously and looks around.)

CARRIE: *(Quietly.)* Hello? Anyone here? Sabrina?

(She puts the house key into her purse and exits quickly into the kitchen. A beat. The door to the bedroom upstage opens. Sabrina enters carrying a baseball bat. She walks cautiously into the living room.)

SABRINA: Hello? Is someone there?

(Carrie enters from the kitchen, carrying a blender, unseen by Sabrina. She stops cold in her tracks. A moment.)

CARRIE: Sabrina-

(Sabrina screams and whirls around nearly hitting Carrie with the bat. Carrie screams as well. There's a moment of recognition and relief from Sabrina.)

SABRINA: Jesus Christ!

CARRIE: No. Sorry. Not Jesus. It's just...me.

SABRINA: Just you, huh?

CARRIE: Yes.

SABRINA: You scared the shit out of me, you know?

CARRIE: I'm sorry. I didn't think you'd be here. Otherwise, I would have....

SABRINA: Would have what?

CARRIE: I'm not sure, actually.

SABRINA: And just what in the hell are you doing here?

CARRIE: Oh, sorry. I just stopped by real quick to get my blender. Really, I didn't mean to bother you. I'll get out of your way.

SABRINA: Excuse me?

CARRIE: What?

SABRINA: *Your* blender?

CARRIE: Yeah. I realized in the move that I had forgotten to pack it, so I thought I'd pop in and get it. I'm sorry that I scared you. (*An awkward moment.*) So...I should get going.

SABRINA: Wait right there. I think I must have misheard you. I am sure what you meant to say just now is "*our* blender."

CARRIE: No, actually, you didn't mishear anything. I said what I meant. *My* blender.

SABRINA: I don't think so. We bought that blender together. I remember that day crystal clear. It was June two years ago. We bought that blender at Target on sale for \$34.99 in preparation for our upcoming Fourth of July party. I remember these things, Carrie. It's one of my many gifts: attention to detail.

CARRIE: Oh, if only that were true, Bree. I mean, you're right. We did use this blender making margaritas for that Fourth of July party two years ago. But, you're wrong in saying we got this from Target. *We* never got this at all! I owned this long before I ever met you. And FYI, I got it at William Sonoma.

SABRINA: Bullshit-

CARRIE: It's not! It was our four-slot bagel-sized toaster that we got at Target. And while it was indeed \$34.99, we bought in October. Not June.

SABRINA: No, I don't think...Wait. Is that right?

CARRIE: Of course it's right! Why would I lie about the damn blender? Good-bye.

(Carrie heads towards the door.)

SABRINA: Wait, Carrie....

CARRIE: Yes?

SABRINA: I'm confused.

CARRIE: Oh, for God's sake. It's not that difficult, Sabrina. Look at the bottom of the blender. It even says William Sonoma!

SABRINA: No. Not about the blender.

CARRIE: Then what?

SABRINA: About *you*. I mean, how exactly did you get in here?

CARRIE: What?

SABRINA: How is it that you managed to just waltz into my house to steal our blender?

CARRIE: *My* blender.

SABRINA: Whatever.

CARRIE: Well, um, I...

SABRINA: Yes?

CARRIE: (*She removes the key from her purse.*) I used this.

SABRINA: Jesus, Carrie!

CARRIE: I'm sorry, I-

SABRINA: You moved out six weeks ago!
(*Pointing to an end table.*) You left your key
on that very end table when you walked out the
door for what I thought was the last time. I
mean, I saw you do it!

CARRIE: I know.

SABRINA: Okay. Maybe I'm *not* great with little
details, but that's one image that I remember
quite vividly. I mean, how can you not re-
member that last moment before your girl-
friend abandons you completely?

CARRIE: I said I know!

SABRINA: Then where the hell did that key
come from?

CARRIE: It's a spare. Okay? I had it made
months before we broke up-

SABRINA: Oh my God!

CARRIE: I had given it to my sister to water the
plants when we were in New Orleans. And I
realized I still had it, so-

SABRINA: Wait! Do you do this often? Just
come into my house in the middle of the day
when I'm at work?

CARRIE: Of course not!

SABRINA: That's criminal!

CARRIE: Sabrina, don't you think you're being a little over dramatic here?

SABRINA: No. It's called breaking and entering. It's an actual crime. I mean, do you think that I won't press charges?

CARRIE: You're being ridiculous.

SABRINA: I'm the city prosecutor! This is me at my most logical. This is literally what I do. I should call the police.

(Sabrina picks up the phone.)

CARRIE: Put the phone down, will you? God, Bree! Is this really what we've come to?

SABRINA: What else? I mean, I can't trust you and clearly you're coming in here all the time when-

CARRIE: I don't come in here all the time, okay? Or *ever*, really. This is the first time, I swear. I just....This has been really hard for me, too. Do you think having to leave that key behind was easy for me? That it was just a breeze for me to walk out that door?

SABRINA: It doesn't matter.

CARRIE: Well, it wasn't, okay? It wasn't easy for me at all. When I found that spare, I thought it just made sense to hold on to it...just in case.

SABRINA: Just in case of what?

CARRIE: Just in case. Period... I don't know. In case...it wasn't really over.

SABRINA: (*Laughing.*) Oh my God. I don't believe this.

CARRIE: What? That this was hard for *me* too?

SABRINA: You left, Carrie. Why wouldn't it really be over?

CARRIE: Because-

SABRINA: I needed *you* and you left!

CARRIE: And I *needed* to go!

SABRINA: Then you should have left all of your keys. Even the spare! God! I thought you were a...I could have hit you with this bat just now!

CARRIE: Yes, I know. You came pretty damn close as it was.

SABRINA: Well, I played for six years on my old firm's softball league. I'm good with a bat.

CARRIE: You don't have to tell me twice. So just put that thing down, okay? I mean, why are you even walking around with it?

SABRINA: For protection. I live on my own now, remember?

CARRIE: So?

SABRINA: So you were the Ellen of this relationship, darling. I am the Portia.

CARRIE: Excuse me? What does that even mean?

SABRINA: I am just saying I'm a wee bit more... dainty than you. Criminals see you – they take off running. Scared out of their ever-loving minds. Criminals see me and they think, "Holy hell – this bitch is a pushover."

CARRIE: What? Are you saying I'm more butch than you are?

SABRINA: Well really, I was just alluding to it. But apparently, you need me to spell it all out for you. Guess they never covered deductive reasoning at The Paul Mitchell School of Cosmetology, huh?

CARRIE: Wow. That was low. Even for you.

SABRINA: Even for me? Oh, I'm sorry. Once I realized it was you and *didn't* hit you with the bat, I sort of felt like I was taking the high road.

CARRIE: It's 12:30 in the afternoon. On a Thursday. I mean, what kind of criminals are coming after you at this time of day?

SABRINA: Okay. I think I'm a bit more well versed in this city's criminal element than you. Okay? You should really think about educating yourself for your own safety, Carrie. I mean, all the meth-heads come out mid-day to break into random strangers' homes and rob them of their cash and prescription drugs when they think everyone's at work. And let's face it...if people are casing this house, they are going to know three things: 1. I'm the city prosecutor. What's a better score than screwing over her, right? 2. I live alone - thank you for that, by the way. And 3. I'm all stocked up on prescription drugs. Not any of the good kind, really - but, then, how would they know that?

CARRIE: Is that why you're not at work? Are you not feeling well?

SABRINA: No.

CARRIE: Has it been-?

SABRINA: Not "no I'm not feeling well." No. I'm not going to have this conversation with you.

CARRIE: Look, I'm sorry that this is hard and that you're hurting.